A Noble Kinsman

by

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A NOBLE KINSMAN

A NOVEL

BY

ANTON GIULIO BARRILI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY

H. A. MARTIN.

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A NOBLE KINSMAN.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD AND YOUNG.

FIRST of all, the separation of the young people was an accomplished fact, and even independently of the compact proposed by the Prince of Caivano, any accommodation between Renato and the family in Donna Romita lane seemed impossible.

Though Signor Garantini had done his best in the matter of Ruggero Altavilla's lawsuit, he was yet by no means confident of victory. Hence he was by no means averse to entertaining the compromise offered by the Prince of Caivano. Accordingly he forwarded the Prince of Caivano's proposal at once to Signor Ruggero, requesting him in an accompanying letter to let him know his decision.

And Signor Ruggero gave an answer that very day —not to his lawyer, but to the prince himself; and the reply betrayed the impatience with which the old

gentleman had received the offer, or more exactly the impression it had made upon his mind. His reply, written in this frame of mind, was so exasperating to the Prince of Caivano, already sufficiently provoked, as we know, and angry with the supposed beguilers of his son Renato, that he considered himself obliged to send for two tried friends in hot haste, and through them to demand satisfaction from Signor Ruggero. The prince was just waiting to hear the result of this chivalrous embassy when the servant came to tell him—

"Eccellenza, two ladies have come to see you."

"To see me? Two ladies?" Don Federigo asked, in surprise.

"That is, one lady; for the other looks like a maid, or something of that kind."

"I don't understand," said the prince, shrugging his shoulders. "Did she give her name?"

"No, Eccellenza, and from her appearance I didn't like to ask her."

The prince's curiosity was aroused, and he gave orders for the young lady to be shown in, adding that he would present himself in the course of a few minutes.

Don Federigo, like a good master of the house, left the servant time to take his message and to go before making his appearance. The lady was alone, and as soon as he appeared she got up, but like a person very tired, making a great effort to move. She was wonderfully beautiful, as white as marble, and her large eyes showed traces of recent tears.

The Prince of Caivano was a thorough gentleman,

and seeing her so tottering, he hurried forwards to support her.

"Sit down, Signora, I entreat you! What can I do for you?"

"Thank you," she replied, in an exhausted voice. "Thank you for your kindness. I need it all, Signor, because I have come to ask you a favour."

The petitioner was so beautiful; she had such an aristocratic look that it never entered the prince's head that she could be an adventuress or a beggar of high rank, and at the word favour he did not move a muscle.

"If the thing lies in my power," he said, with as much gentleness as he could put into his words, "I am at your service."

"It is certainly in your power," replied the stranger, falling on her knees. "Be generous; don't deprive a poor girl of her father."

With these words she fell into his arms, as, astonished by this attitude of humility and supplication, he stooped down to raise her.

Don Federigo laid her on the sofa, at the same time pondering over what she had just said. And very soon he thought he understood what the reader, more collected than he was, must have guessed at once. It was the daughter of Ruggero Altavilla, the siren who had bewildered Renato; beautiful, certainly, enough to explain, if not to justify, the folly of his son.

The prince would fain at first have put on a severe expression; but to what purpose with a lady half fainting? And was it right to leave her like this, without doing anything for her, or even uttering such

a civil word as one would give to a stranger taken suddenly ill in the street?

First of all he tried to revive her by sprinkling a few drops of scent on her face. The girl came to herself, and her beautiful eyes and broken words expressed the greatest gratitude for Don Federigo's kindness, but her laboured breathing and her sobs showed that her agitation had not been overcome.

"Signorina, compose yourself," he said, politely. "The state you are in demands the greatest consideration, and—whatever a father, justly offended, may think—compels me to listen to you."

"Offended, and in what way by us?" demanded the girl, to whom these words of Don Federigo's gave an opening and courage to speak. "If you mean the lawsuit, Signor, would you not have done the same in our place if you thought yourself in the right?"

"Yes," replied the old gentleman. "But it is very different in my case, very different. My son——"

He was about to add—

"My son is ill, seriously ill, through you;" when he stopped himself in time.

But in this hesitation Margherita could only see an allusion to the acquaintance of Renato with them.

"Prince, you are mistaken if you think—it makes me blush to speak of these things. But I have had the courage to come here to the Palazzo Caivano itself, and I trust that God will give me strength to go on, because I came to defend my father."

"It is noble of you," replied Don Federigo, "and I have no wish nor right to complain. But, you see, I, as a gentleman, cannot say to you, Signorina——"

"Oh, you may. I am an Altavilla, and I can listen to anything that concerns us. Signor, you can listen to the truth, and I, too, have no fear of it. Life has its evil hours, when all womanly weakness must be overcome, and we can suffer, if necessary, but at the same time defend ourselves from insulting suspicions. If I have done wrong, or if any one belonging to me has done wrong, speak freely; I will answer you."

The Prince of Caivano bowed, much impressed, in spite of himself, with these dignified words.

"Signorina," he said, "I accuse no one. I am defending myself and my own, as I have a right to do; I may say further, as a father and the head of a family ought to do. Without wishing to prejudice the lawsuit pending between us, I offered a sum of money to your father, and I think that cannot have offended him."

"It is not the offer which offended him; it was the compact, Signor. The compact shows what importance you attach justly to the liberty of your son," she remarked, with a bitterness she could not conceal; "but, believe me, there was no necessity either for offers or compacts to obtain what my father never dreamt of disputing. And, if my father considered himself offended by the compact and rejected it with hard words, had he not an excuse in his feeling as a father? And no one who knew Margherita Altavilla could believe her capable of a design such as you, Signor, insinuated. However it may be, I do not complain as far as I am concerned; I even put aside the consideration that a father may well be offended

by an unjust suspicion, and these bitter words I am sorry for. Will you not accept the apologies which I make you—I, the innocent cause of all this quarrel?"

Where could this timid girl, whose weakness was so evident on her first encounter with the prince, find so much daring and eloquence. Her father's life was in danger, in danger through her, and Margherita felt a courage within her equal to the gravity of the situation. Wounded in the feelings that are best and holiest in a woman, her modesty, her love for her father, she showed no sign of weakness, except her faintness for a moment. And it was really marvellous, the nobility with which she disregarded the pain to herself, and forgot her timidity to devote herself to the sacred task of saving her father; while he, at that moment, had just found two friends whom he had sent to arrange matters with the prince's seconds.

"Signorina," the prince said in the meantime, in a tone of sincere regret, "unfortunately I am no longer the arbiter of my own honour, having put the matter in the hands of two gentlemen."

"Yes, but they must be good men, and they will understand that a duel between Ruggero Altavilla and the Prince of Caivano is impossible," replied the courageous girl. "Ah, it is not right, Signor, it is not right to be harsh with us on account of our error, of which we are innocent. For, after all, what did we know of your family? The Duke of Melito we only knew yesterday. To my father and me, he was Errico di Sarno, and when he remembers this it may well cause him pain."

These words burst from her almost involuntarily;

but she had a sacred obligation to fulfil, and this silenced every other consideration and feeling, however deep and bitter.

"My son under an assumed name?" Don Federigo exclaimed, with a frown. "Signorina, are you sure of this? And what could his object have been?"

"Signor, I have no right to guess," replied Margherita; and her face flushed crimson.

"That's true; I beg your pardon! You must forgive a father!" replied Don Federigo, embarrassed.

The girl perceived his confusion, and in her kind-heartedness regretted it.

"Thank you!" she murmured, with the manner of a daughter to her father. "People talk of your courtesy, and it is really true. Be generous at the same time! Let your challenge go no farther, Signor; don't put the peace of a poor family in peril. I have no one left to me except my father; my only brother emigrated eight months ago, and God knows when we shall see him again. My chief and only protector is my father. Let your feelings speak for me, Signor; think of his daughter, left to loneliness and poverty, without a relation or friend in the world—and then decide."

Don Federigo felt the tears coming into his eyes at this touching appeal. He was, you know, an egotist in triple mail; but he was the head of the family, and the thought that a Caivano might be left alone in the world, without any other protection except her name, and that her name might prove to be an inadequate shield in passing through this troublesome world, made him shiver.

"Signorina," he stammered, "what you say touches me greatly, I must confess; and believe me, if it were in my power—— But, as I have already told you, I have sent a challenge to Signor Ruggero, and without great disrespect to my friends I cannot draw back."

"I know; and my father immediately went out in search of two friends of his. I heard him settling the place of meeting with them, not the exact spot, but they talked of the Largo di San Ferdinando. I waited till they had gone out, and my father too; and then getting a kind neighbour to accompany me, I set off immediately to see you, I felt so uneasy. And, Signor, you must not let my coming be in vain."

And then, she once more fell on her knees before the prince. He let her remain in this humble position longer than such an accomplished gentleman should, while considering how he could best satisfy the poor child, without compromising the dignity of his family.

"Signorina," he said at last, "I can promise you nothing; but I assure you, that whatever lies in my power I will do to stop this duel, and put an end to the question," he added, seeing a deadly pallor spreading over her face. "And I hope to be successful, never fear. But let us be candid, Signorina. I am a father, and I have certain rights. I have been born a prince, and though I don't set much store by this circumstance—a mere accident—still I do not forget what, from my position, I owe to society."

"Signor, I do not understand," replied Margherita.

"Tell me everything, and you need not be afraid of offending me."

"Nor vexing you, Signorina? Can you promise me?"

"If it does not concern my father, I promise everything," she cried, vehemently.

"Well then, Signorina, you must know that I have disposed of the hand of my son. That happened long ago," he added, to soften the announcement; "and you cannot blame me."

These words caused poor Margherita great anguish; though she had known, as she left the Fiorentini, that her attachment had received its death blow. A beloved image passed before her eyes to receive her last adieu.

"Signor," she said, with a great effort, "I do not care for the Duke of Melito, and I will never marry him."

"I understand, Signora; but Errico di Sarno—— "

"Errico di Sarno is nothing to me."

"But if he should return, and forgetting the harm he has done, should try again—— "

"He will not do that," she interrupted; "nor, let him do what he pleases, could I listen to him. I have said already, Signor, that I will never marry him, and I always keep my word. Is not that enough? Tell him that you have seen me and spoken to me; that I love—yes, that I love some one else," she added, in a low voice, as if the sound of her own words alarmed her; "and I will not contradict you."

"Will you swear it?"

"Before God, and by the life of my father."

"Then, I will do what I can to satisfy you. And once more, allow me to say: if your father does not consider my proposal an insult, I am still ready——"

"Enough, Signor; enough! If we lose the lawsuit, God will give us strength to bear that blow too. But we are Altavillas, and cannot accept any alms."

Don Federigo could not help admiring the high-spirited girl, with a look of courage in her face, enough for twenty generations of Altavillas and their heart of gold.

At that moment the servant appeared at the door.

"Who is it?" the old gentleman asked.

"Eccellenza, the Baron di Sant' Erno and Don Marino Caracciolo."

"Ah!" exclaimed Margherita. "It is the same."

"Indeed!" replied Don Federigo, rather perplexed.

"Signor, don't forget. I have your word."

"You have. But wait, don't go away by that door. Come with me, Signorina; and in a short time I will tell you what I have been able to do for you."

The prince then opened a side-door, and conducted Margherita into another room leading into his mother's apartments.

The old lady was seated in the window with a book in her hands, but she was not reading. She was thinking of her dear Renato, her poor grandson, that she had left a little while before in a drowsy state, but not out of danger yet.

"My dear mother," said the prince, pointing to Margherita, who was timidly following him; "this young lady has come to ask me to do her a service.

Will you entertain her till my visitors, arriving at this very inopportune time, have left me."

"Certainly, Federigo, if an old woman's company can give any pleasure to this pretty young lady, who seems to me in trouble about something."

She too had red eyes, the poor princess, and her pale face showed for all the anxiety of this sad day. But the kind old lady forgot her own troubles, seeing or guessing those of others.

Don Federigo gave Margherita a significant look, which she understood and replied to with a nod, as if she would say: "Do not fear, Signor, I am bound to you by gratitude, and she will hear nothing from me about my errand here."

This must have been the expression of her face; for the prince departed, looking satisfied. He had received a solemn promise from the girl, a girl who had shown so much firmness, and his noble family was saved from the danger of having her for a daughter-in-law.

Would King Priam have given himself so much trouble; he who had fifty children to be married? Impossible to say, without knowing whether the King of Troy was as great an egotist as the Prince of Caivano; who, having gained his point in this way, thought himself the luckiest man in the world. As to the two hearts which he was sacrificing to his abominable pride, they never cost him a thought. For he never would admit that people could die of love, and he had always looked on this idea as a fancy of novelists.

Don Federigo, having once determined to gratify

Margherita's request, was not long in discovering a way out of the difficulty. His character for bravery stood too high to admit of any suspicion being cast upon his courage ; and, on explaining to his seconds the peculiar position in which he now found himself, they readily agreed to take advantage of a technical dispute that had arisen between them and Don Ruggero's seconds, in the hope that they might in this way eventually obviate any necessity for the duel being fought.

As soon as his noble friends had taken their departure, Don Federigo returned to his mother's room. There he found Margherita with tears in her eyes. The girl, as soon as she saw the prince, rose from her seat, and the princess did the same, at the same time putting her arms round Margherita to kiss her forehead.

Don Federigo frowned, and in his heart he began to fear that he had made a mistake in leaving this girl in his mother's company.

"What has happened? and why are you crying?" he asked Margherita at once, on returning to his room. "You have surely not told my mother anything?"

"No, prince. Your mother is a most kind-hearted lady. She saw that I was unhappy, and she tried to comfort me without asking me any questions. She told me instead of her own troubles, and I learnt from her that the duke is unwell. I was not prepared for this, and it made me cry. Oh, Signor, I shall never forgive myself for having, even innocently, brought this trouble upon you."

"And you have let nothing transpire about yourself?"

"No; by everything that is most holy, I have not."

Don Federigo breathed more freely.

"Signorina," he said, "your silence is the price of the service which I have done you. But I must add another condition. You must not allow my son to see you again."

"That is quite fair, and I will not," replied Margherita, with a bow. "But remember, you too have promised. My father——"

"I have told my seconds to let the matter drop, and if Ruggero Altavilla does not persist in challenging me, your wish is accomplished."

"Thank you!" murmured the girl. "You are most good and noble-hearted."

With these words Margherita withdrew from the room, to find her escort, Signora Concetta, fast asleep, with her back against the wall, and her chin buried in her shawl. Then the two women took their way back to their home in Donna Romita lane.

Three days later the little nest was empty. Even Signora Concetta had no idea where her lodgers on the fifth storey had gone to; and, with some reason, she despaired of ever having any one like them again.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALTAVILLA *v.* ALTAVILLA.

THE 20th of April, 1869, was a remarkable date in the annals of the Neapolitan Bar. The lawsuit between Don Ruggero Altavilla and the Prince of Caivano was begun; the lawyers on both sides pleaded with their usual skill (it was considered that Garantini had never done better, he who was rightly looked on as one of the most eloquent lawyers in Naples), and the Tribunale Eccellentissimo pronounced sentence.

But for all his skill Garantini had been only partially successful; for the Tribunale, while recognizing that the new evidence was fully sufficient to prove the legitimacy of Don Ruggero's birth, refused to give any sanction to his claim upon the Caivano estates; ruling that the entry in the lawyer's notebook, even if allowed its fullest weight, might yet be merely evidence of the execution of a will which the testator had, in later years, rescinded in disgust at the conduct of his elder son. For these reasons the

Tribunale declared the plaintiff, Don Ruggero Altavilla, to be freed from the stigma of illegitimacy, and acknowledged him to be a legitimate descendant of Don Corrado; but, on the other hand, declared the claim of the plaintiff to the property, in virtue of its being entailed, to be inadmissible, and pronounced in favour of the defendant, Don Federigo. But, for all his victory, Don Federigo could not but feel that the public looked with some degree of suspicion on the ominous fact that directly after the notary's death his desk had been found broken open. To this was added the fact that the sudden disappearance of the old notary's son only a few months before the new trial was a yet more awkward circumstance to explain. He would now have given anything to have been able to have forced Don Ruggero to accept the terms offered so short a time ago. It would have looked like a magnanimous offer on the part of a man who knew the excellence of his case, but who had no wish to abuse it, and it would have stopped the abominable remarks of the common people, who always side with the vanquished against the victors.

But no; his haughty adversary had indignantly refused his gift, to allow all that murderous gossip to fall on him and his. And not to be able to revenge himself! Confounded public opinion, everywhere and nowhere, he never knew how to stop it, or how to hit it on the head!

The depositary of all this impotent rage was of course Signor Turiello Schisano. The latter had his own particular grudge against the prince's adversary, both on account of the marriage, always his own

great object, and the danger that some day or other all his knavery would come to light. For, notwithstanding his alliance with the prince, the latter was by no means an accomplice. Don Federigo did not know all that his secretary knew for certain, and was perfectly ignorant as to how and why the son of Turchiarulo, the notary, had disappeared from Melito.

Ah, if Signor Turiello had only known into whose hands the famous will had fallen! They had denied its existence; but *he* believed in it like so many others, and with more reason, because he judged his worthy forefathers by himself, and in the lucky breaking open of the desk he traced the cause of his aunt's marriage with the prince. Then, this precious document, what had become of it? Was it possible that any Schisano had thrown into the fire a document, the possession of which would, to several generations of secretaries, be the best security for their position and fortune? Ah, if he only had it now, what a potent arm it would be for introducing another Schisano into the Altavilla family! Whereas, poor Signor Turiello, with all his cunning and all his efforts, was only making a rope of sand. An alliance with Renato could no longer be counted on, because Don Renato was in love with another lady, and even a vigilant father could do nothing to hinder it. As to Don Federigo, he could not think that he would ever consent to the marriage, unless he were compelled; and all the help that he had hoped for from the old princess could no longer be counted on, since the illness of her beloved grandson.

And Renato, in the meantime, out of health as he

was, could take no comfort to himself from the sentence, which, for the honour of the family, he could not certainly wish different; and yet the result of the trial was by no means satisfactory to him.

Leaving out of consideration the different feelings which were agitating him, the Duke of Melito had another and equally bitter ground for regret, viz., the reflection that the honour of his own family had not come out of the business as unscathed as his chivalrous feelings and his regard for his family might have desired. He could not help seeing that the legitimacy of Don Ruggero, acknowledged by a judicial sentence, made his father's adversary a prince in the eyes of the world, and that all this would refresh old people's memories and set the tongues of the young ones going. Leaving the entail out of the question, the property might have been equally divided, and this had been hindered by the confiscation. And the public, knowing who had benefited by the confiscation, would it not condemn his father and grandfather? Moreover, the elder branch had been attached to the liberal party, and in consequence had suffered poverty and exile; while the younger, being of the Bourbon party, had been laden with riches and honours, at the cost of their own relations.

These thoughts were like daggers in Renato's heart. Added to them was the constant reflection that this second discomfiture of his relations was his fault, and that he had lost any claim to Margherita's affection and to Ruggero's esteem. His brain, thanks to his youth, had withstood the shock, and judging from appearances, he might be considered recovered; but

he was sick at heart, suffering in a way that filled his two friends, and the sole confidants of his unfortunate love affairs, Garantini and Carafa, with compassion. The doctors, seeing that he was not making much way, had advised him to try what travelling might do for him. His father wished it; Donna Anna advised it with that solicitude which made her like a mother to him; and Renato resigned himself to leaving Naples. But he would have liked to see Margherita, at least to see her and to beg her pardon for all the trouble he had brought on her. It was then that Garantini, driven to extremities, told him of his interview with Signor Ruggero, repeating what the proud old man had said. But Renato still very properly persisted.

"She will turn me out," he said; "she will abuse me; what matter? I ought to let Margherita know that I wished to throw myself at her feet, and that as I couldn't get near her, I had gone down on my knees at her door."

Antonio Carafa accompanied him, feeling how noble his friend's motives were, and hoping to be able to moderate with his presence the disagreeableness of such an interview. But the reader can guess the result. The two friends found new faces in Ruggero Altavilla's late abode. The proud old gentleman and his beautiful daughter had taken their departure a month before, and no one knew where they had gone.

Signora Concetta could not refrain from tears, when Renato came to make inquiries of her, at seeing him so altered. Even the words of the good landlady went to his heart.

"Signor!" she exclaimed, giving way involuntarily to lamentation, "what have you done? When we were so happy!"

Antonio Carafa dragged his poor friend down the stairs, hardly able to see where he was going.

In Casa Caivano the gloom continued. Don Federigo was grave, saying little to any one, and patient with his son. His wife did not dare to open her lips; the old lady was busy with her own thoughts, and her eyes were dim with shedding tears.

Therefore when his father said, in a tone that admitted of no contradiction, "I think, Don Renato, you had better start to-morrow," the poor boy had not courage enough to make any resistance. The following day, after a solemn leave-taking with his father, and a blessing from his affectionate grandmother, Don Renato started from Naples for Paris and Turin, accompanied on his pilgrimage by his faithful friend, Antonio Carafa.

I have already said that the quiet little home in Donna Romita had been deserted; and now with a novelist's privilege of knowing everything, I shall tell you where the inhabitants had gone.

Signor Ruggero had taken a modest lodging, consisting of three rooms, at the end of the Salita del Petraio; a steep ascent, worthy of its name, winding by steps, far from easy, past the Castle Sant' Elmo, between the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele and the baths of San Martino. Both rich and poor are to be met with there. The rich have elegant villas, with grounds and gardens in the English style, or more properly speaking, the old Italian, as it was the gardens in-

vented by our cinque-cento poets which set an example to British grandeur. The poor have cottages, facing in all directions, with entrances to them more puzzling than the labyrinth of Crete, but all with the universal terrace, which in that favoured land takes the place of a roof, and makes the front of the house look like a face without eyebrows.

On these terraces flourish parsley, fennel, and celery, useful in kitchens whose resources are limited; from the windows are suspended strings of garlic, onions, and tomatoes, which serve to season the poor people's soup; between the different houses wave tufts of palm-trees, and the thick, profusely flowering branches of oleander. The warm rays of the sun beautify and brighten all this loveliness; the land and sea breezes divide the day between them; and Naples, the Syren, spreads herself out before your eyes, with her beautiful bay, from Sorrento to Posilipo, and the island of Capri in the distance, with its double summit like old Parnassus. It is an enchanting view, and rich and poor alike can enjoy it.

The only change in Signor Ruggero's habits was that he worked harder to make up the deficit, which the expenses of going to law had caused. But, alas, people do not work with much energy when their work is unprofitable, and Signor Ruggero's paintings, slenderly enough paid when he did original works of art in his studio in Donna Romita, began to go down in value when he only made copies. What he was offered was scarcely enough to repay him for the colours and canvas.

"What can I do, Signor?" said the dealer, apolo-

getically. "No one will buy. Photography is ruining us."

Signor Ruggero bowed, and submitted without a murmur to the depreciation of his poor wares. But the unfortunate gentleman felt more discouraged than ever.

Nor was this all. One day the dealer refused to take any more of his paintings at any price. There were dilettanti who supplied him with work equally good (he was nearly saying better), and the market was almost glutted. He must have patience. The dilettanti spoilt the market; they were in rivalry with the sun and its high priests, the photographers.

Ruggero Altavilla went about trying to find a purchaser, but in vain. One man already had plenty of daubs like his; another only employed people he knew, and the depression of trade was such, that he could not buy from any one else; because, after all, it was only charity more or less disguised.

Signor Ruggero once more bowed his head, but this time it was to hide his tears. What crime had he committed that God should lay His hand so heavily on him?

He was far, very far from imagining the revengefulness of men. He could not imagine that the rancour of Martino Palmanova could be so obstinate and bitter as to persecute him in his honest ways of earning his bread; nor did he know what sort of friendship there was between the pretender to Margherita's hand and the grandson and worthy descendant of Vito Schisano, the robber of his father's will, and the informer of the Bourbon police.

Soon the want of money made itself felt; consequently they began, I tell it without shame, to do the best they could with their remaining possessions. The Prince of Caivano *in partibus pauperum* every morning went down early from Petraio to the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele to make his own purchases, instead of the servant, whom he had been obliged to dismiss. Sometimes he did not stop there, but prolonged his walk to the Monte di Pietà; and on those days he did his shopping on his way back.

A melancholy journey to the Monte di Pietà! People go there with their most precious possessions, superfluities perhaps, but at one time bought to be used, and they return with a little bit of paper in their pocket-books. Those little nothings had been dear friends of ours, signs of former prosperity, reminiscences of some pleasant time or of some beloved person; and yet we have to part with them. They go, but to return, that is understood—at least people hope so. However, the time for redeeming them comes too soon; they are pawned again. And then? You get on as well as you can; all your most dearly-loved possessions follow, like Dante's sheep, "Che dove l'una va, le altre vanno." And a day comes when having pawned your things, you pawn the tickets. Can they be redeemed? That is the great question. But, believe me, the slope is easy, and you find yourself at the bottom almost before you are aware of it. These little mementoes of better days are like our health and strength. While we have some left we never despair of getting over our small infirmities. But years increase, and with years come

infirmities, and we begin to care less about living. Besides, what good is it? The old follies do not consort with graver years; those beautiful hills are less inviting; travelling has lost its charms; beauty, that divine thing, a feeling which we expected to retain as long as our eyes lasted, or longer, the sight of loveliness no longer moves us. Then, are we not better dead? In this way, people (I speak of people who reflect, not of those who only vegetate) become accustomed to the idea of going; sometimes they are glad to die; sometimes they would fain wait a little, but only from a feeling of curiosity; the others, curious or not, meet their fate uncomplainingly, and plunge into the unseen.

Of Corrado, during this time, no news arrived. At first he had written regularly every fortnight. In Lima, he had succeeded in getting something to do. But the relation he had expected to meet was dead; his family was living on his estates, some days' journey inland, and Corrado had no money to take him so far. First of all, he must work to get some money for the journey. Had he succeeded in this? and had he really gone into the interior? No one could tell; from that day they had received no more tidings of him. Two, three, four mails had arrived in Europe, but without any letter for Signor Ruggero.

And so the summer drew to an end, the time of year when living is easiest in Naples. Autumn had come, and the winter was not far off. How was the needy gentleman to provide for the wants of his family? The only bright spot, and it was a small one, in the

midst of so much misery, was Garantini's appeal against the decision pronounced by the courts. The good lawyer had done this, feeling sure that it would please Renato. But how could an appeal concern two poor shipwrecked creatures like Margherita and her father ?

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN QUEST OF FORTUNE.

WHERE is the mariner, the dark-haired young man, whom we saw at the beginning of our tale, clambering into the rigging of the good ship *La Nunziata*? With the name of the pretty girl on his lips, and her image engraven on his heart, he, like the great Genoese determined to find a new world or die, had gone in search of fortune.

Corrado Altavilla had nothing to carry him through his long journey and all the vicissitudes ahead except his youth and his stout heart; but, to strengthen this, he possessed a portrait, a lock of fair hair, and the echo of an *au revoir* always in his ears, which all the whistling of the wind in the rigging, and all the waves as they broke against the sides of the vessel could not drown.

The voyage had been a pretty good one, and short. *La Nunziata* was a good sailer, and in three months had rounded Cape Horn; from which, without much

loss of canvas, at the end of another month, it reached Valparaiso, and finally Callao, the port of Lima, the Piræus of the Peruvian Athens. No one, as far as I know, ever compared Lima to Athens; and yet it deserves the name more than many other cities, both in the Old World and the New; were it in no other respect than because, though a seafaring place, it is yet some distance from the sea, and because neither monuments nor ruins nor picturesque beauty are wanting to heighten the resemblance.

But Corrado regarded these beauties little, nor did he indulge in classical reminiscences. The "Ciudad de los Reyes," as it was called by its founders, because they had arrived there on the Feast of the Epiphany, had no charms for a heart that was full of Nunziata Palmanova, of his sister Margherita, and of his father Ruggero Altavilla. Three very strong affections; but what a difference between them! How true it is that our own family is the one we have made for ourselves! Like the dove, that, as soon as it can fly, lives for itself, brooding over its nest and its loving mate.

On arrival his duties as a sailor ceased. I have already narrated how Signor Martino made him pay for his passage by serving as a cabin-boy, and that, on arriving at Callao, he was to be free and his own master. Still, he was sorry to leave the brigantine, bearing the name of his beloved, where he had been lulled to sleep with dreams of bliss in his hammock in the forecastle.

Money enough he had for the nine kilometres between Callao and Lima, but not much more. However, what did money matter if, at Lima, he was to

find his mother's cousin, that rich merchant there? And he set about looking for him immediately, and without much trouble he was directed to the house where Egidio Zuniga had lived. But alas! Egidio Zuniga, his relation, his grandmother's nephew, had died the year before.

No greater misfortune could have befallen poor Corrado. And to make matters worse, the family of Egidio Zuniga—that is, his only daughter and his brother-in-law—had gone to live on their property, three or four days' journey from Lima, on the Tunguragua, in that valley which Peruvians compare to the earthly paradise—which they have never seen.

And now indeed poor Corrado felt himself stranded. He spent a day and a night rambling about Lima, with nothing to do; but listening attentively for a chance word of Italian. He heard instead a Genoese expression, which he had learnt on board *La Nunziata*. A Genoese sailor is to be found everywhere, as well as a Lucchese image-dealer. Accordingly, the Genoese expression led him into a shop in the San Lazzaro suburb, where all sorts of things were sold—cheese, salt, meat, nails, "and other eatables." He said he was an Italian, poor, but anxious to find something to do. The shopkeeper was old, and with no one to help him except his wife, a Peruvian older than himself. Corrado's prepossessing appearance, and his letters of introduction to the Zunigas, not yet forgotten in Lima, recommended him to the Genoese merchant, who engaged him as a shop-boy.

Fortune had only been a little capricious with Corrado Altavilla, and after that one day, she began

to smile on him again. He was shop-boy, and supplied the customers with cheese and salt meat, as well as if he had never done anything else in his life. The merchant was not chary of his praises, and merely set down to the unskilfulness of a beginner Corrado's way of cutting the slices a little too thick. That was certainly a defect; but he was young, and had time to mend.

Moreover Corrado had no idea of remaining long among the provisions. He thought of staying only long enough to earn as much as would pay his expenses on his journey to Magdalena, in search of his rich relations. In the meantime he had written them a letter, announcing his arrival, and his object in making a voyage over three seas—the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Pacific.

About twelve days had passed since he had sent his letter to Magdalena, the place where his rich relations lived, when an answer arrived, much sooner than he expected.

In this Corrado found a bill of exchange, and a few lines in Spanish to the following effect:

"Senor Corrado Altavilla,—You are poor, you say, and have no money to bring you here. Enclosed is a letter of credit for one hundred pezzi, which, on presenting at the Canevero Bank, will be paid immediately. If you are a relation of ours, as your name seems to imply, we shall be glad to see you. If you are not, five hundred lire won't break us, and we shall have done some service to an Italian.

"Esperancia Zuniga."

His cousin's letter was original enough. But Corrado was quite as original as she was. He folded up the letter of credit, and with other papers enclosed it in an envelope, addressed to this strange relation. Among the papers sent with the letter of credit there was, of course, an answer to the note as well:

"I return the money, because the doubt you express makes it impossible for me to keep it. If you have any love for Italians, as your father's mother was an Italian, I venture to hope that when you know them better you will learn to esteem them. I enclose a letter from my father, Ruggero Altavilla, to his cousin, Don Egidio Zuniga. If your father among his papers kept any letter from his cousin in Naples, you will easily recognize the handwriting.

"As to my paying my respects to you, I will not fail to do so, as soon as I am a rich man. In the meantime, I am a shop-boy in a modest shop, in the suburb San Lazzaro.

"Yours respectfully,

"CORRADO ALTAVILLA,

"Duke of Melito."

Should he sign himself so? Certainly. No one is perfect in this world, and Corrado felt himself affronted, and all his aristocratic blood was boiling in his veins, more than Saint Januarius's had ever done in the famous phial.

That same day he said to his employer: "Never fear, Mastro Bacciccia; for the future I will cut thinner slices. I will improve, upon my word, because if you keep me, I intend to live and die a provision dealer."

"Come now, you needn't say that," replied the knowing Genoese; "one never knows what a day may bring forth. You are young, and fortune favours——"

"The young. Does she not? It is an old proverb. Has she not given me a specimen of her favour already, bringing me into the suburb San Lazzaro, to the very door of your shop? Believe me, Mastro Bacciccia, I don't ask her for anything else."

"And let it be so, with the blessing of Providence!" exclaimed the old merchant. "After all, mine is a good, safe business. But then, you must keep a good many other things, as I did; you mustn't keep to one sort of goods. Here there is a continual coming and going of people who like to get all they want in one shop, from their daily bread to the bone buttons for their trousers, and the ties for their shoes. See, Corrado; in this way, after working for twenty-two years, I have saved three hundred thousand lire. I couldn't have made that in Genoa, I can tell you! In Genoa, of course, I couldn't have gone into a business like this. What would people have said in Soziglia, or between the two little pillars in the Piazza di Banchi?"

"You have not forgotten your native land," remarked Corrado, who was thinking of his beloved Naples; "why don't you go back to it?"

"Why should I? My wife is from these parts, and you know the poor woman is not a Limenian for nothing. The ladies of Lima sometimes go to Europe, but they can't resign themselves to dying there. Now I am a Genoese, and I can get on anywhere.

My dear boy, you will find Genoese everywhere, even in Paradise," added Signor Bacciccia, with a cunning smile. "Besides, except the country itself, there is nothing to take me there. When I was a poor man my relations would have nothing to say to me. But I don't intend to return them *quid pro quo*. And if they come here after I am dead, and if they should be as poor as I was once, they can go to the Italian Hospital, founded out of my savings. I have made my will already. They ought to thank me, don't you think so?"

"Signor Bacciccia," cried Corrado, "you are a grand fellow; the very prince of hucksters."

And in this way the poor boy tried to accommodate himself to circumstances. But as my readers can easily understand, it was only as far as appearances went, and Corrado in his secret heart felt it bitterly enough. His courage failed him every moment, and the future began to look very black. Annunziata, his father, his sister, his loved ones, who ought to keep up his flagging courage, seemed to get farther and farther away from him.

And after all, what were his prospects, at the best? He would have to slave for a year or two as a shop-boy. Then, Signor Bacciccia, who liked him, and who was in the habit of giving hints that he wished to give up business, might retire in reality, and leave it to him. But how was he to become the owner of the business? Only by going into debt, which he might pay off in a year, or perhaps two, with hard work and frugal living. In a couple more years, the business would be really his, and he might have a

little money. So that, to make his fortune in that way, he would require twenty years or thereabouts. And Corrado, who had about courage enough to wait three or four years, if he had been certain of the result, felt now, when everything was remote and uncertain, as if six months were too long.

But the Fates had decreed that the Duke of Melito and Salamina was to proceed from surprise to surprise, like the hero in the "Thousand and One Nights."

One morning Corrado saw a carriage stopping at the door of his shop, or, more correctly, his master's. It was a hired carriage, but imposing enough for all that; and even if it had not been, it would have looked so from its occupants—two exquisitely-dressed ladies, and an old gentleman, beautiful to behold, with diamond studs adorning the front of his shirt more showily than tastefully.

A servant, seated on the box beside the coachman, jumped down to open the carriage door. The old gentleman got out, and after him the elder of the two ladies, evidently a companion. Then the other lady alighted, and the coachman was left by himself.

But the last of the two ladies, my readers, I must describe in a few words. She had a languid air, like one who had only left a luxurious Indian hammock for the cushions of the carriage. Still, after rising in her turn, she sprang out as lightly as a gazelle, displaying an exquisitely modelled foot. She was dressed simply in black silk, but this very simplicity was a sign of art, and suggested the perfect taste of M. Worth. A mantilla of Flanders lace was draped gracefully around her shoulders, and partly covered

her luxuriant tresses of raven hair. Her rounded cheeks and olive complexion were set off by coral lips, and a pair of very long black eyelashes concealing her eyes. However, as she alighted, her eyes flashed out from under them, and as her lips opened with a pleasant smile, she displayed a row of teeth more beautiful than any Saint Antony saw during his temptation in the Thebaid, though it is said that on that occasion the enemy of mankind employed all his best weapons.

On this occasion the new Saint Antony was an old Genoese provision dealer, whose acquaintance we made quite recently, and who came politely to the door of his shop, with his most engaging smile.

"What can I show you, ladies?" he asked, moving respectfully to the side, when he saw that they really meant to come in.

In the meantime Signor Bacciccia reflected—

"My hams must have become quite celebrated when two ladies like this come to buy in person! But is it hams they really want? I have so many things in there."

The honest man's doubts did credit to his perspicacity. People are not born Ligurians for nothing.

The ladies went into the shop, followed by the old gentleman with the diamond studs. The youngest of the two, who had all the look and manner of the mistress, came forward, and with a determined expression said to the shopkeeper—

"Is there an Italian living here?"

Signor Bacciccia retreated a little, not knowing how the land lay.

"A different thing from ham!" he muttered between his teeth. "A nice thing for a beautiful girl like that to come to look for in my shop!"

Then he continued aloud—

"Signora, I am an Italian, I am proud to say. But to be quite honest, I must tell you that there are two here," added the old man, with a knowing little laugh; "a Genoese, that is myself, Giovanni Battista Rivara, at your service, and my shop-boy, Corrado Altavilla, a Neapolitan."

"Altavilla! yes, Altavilla!" cried the young lady, nodding her head with satisfaction. "Where is he? We have come to look for him."

"Here he is, behind the counter, Señorita. Corrado! How is this? he is gone!" exclaimed Signor Bacciccia, raising his eyebrows. "Corrado! Signor Corrado!" he continued, in compliment to the rank of the visitors, "come here; some one wishes to see you."

Corrado, on hearing the first question asked by the lady, had guessed who she was. And as he still bore her a slight grudge on account of her letter, he had gone off into a room behind the shop, pretending to lift down a cheese mould from the shelf.

"Signor Corrado, some one is calling you," said the old Signora Mariguita Rivara, who was smoking her cigarette at the garden gate.

"I heard, Signora, I heard; I am just going," but without moving a step, till his master called him a second time.

"What is it, Signor Battista? I am here."

"Come, my dear boy, make haste; you are wanted."

"I? And what does any one want with me?" he said, appearing at last at the door.

In the meantime, he had skilfully whisked off his apron. No one likes to look ridiculous in the eyes of a woman, whether her opinion is of consequence or not.

Corrado then perceived the lady and bowed to her gravely.

"Can I be of any service?" he asked, in Italian.

"Are you the Duke of Melito?" asked the young lady.

"Yes," he replied giving a haughty glance at his sleeves, rolled up to the elbows.

The old gentleman in attendance now came forward, and said, pointing to the young lady—

"My niece, Señorita Speranza Zuniga, the daughter of Don Egidio Zuniga, your mother's cousin."

"Oh!" said Corrado again, with another bow.

"Yes, it is I," added the young lady, speaking her transatlantic Spanish very slowly, that her cousin might understand her without trouble. "I am come to make the *amende honorable* for my rudeness. I wrote you a thoughtless letter, my cousin; at least so it seemed to me, when I received your reply. I did not believe at first that it was you. And, you know, it might have been some one else, who had known you, and, knowing our relationship, had found it convenient to borrow your name. However, I don't mean to put that forward as a justification of my conduct; I started for Lima—a five days' journey, no less—and I am come to beg you to forgive me."

Corrado was a gentleman, and a Neapolitan—that

is to say, he was a gentleman twice over. His pretty cousin too had apologized so humbly, that he, even without these two motives, could only do what you and I, gentle reader, would have done also. He approached the young lady, and said courteously—

"Señorita, I don't like to shake hands with you, for I should spoil your gloves. But, believe me, I am quite overwhelmed with so much kindness. And if in my letter I allowed my wounded pride to appear too plainly, I hope you will forget it, as I have forgotten everything."

Speranza Zuniga listened to him attentively, with her pretty head bent a little forwards, like a sparrow on a bough when a nightingale is singing. Perhaps she was thinking of a saying of Charles the Fifth's, that he thought Spanish had been invented for speaking to God, and Italian for speaking to the beloved one. Certainly the soft idiom of this gallant youth was like music to her ears, and, curiously enough, she understood it all, from the first word to the last.

By this time all Corrado's rancour had evaporated, and he was zealously helping his master, to whom the bright idea had occurred of offering three chairs to the visitors, but who could nowhere find any except his own.

Speranza Zuniga graciously accepted the one her cousin had offered to her.

"We shall spend this day in Lima," she said, making an abrupt beginning, "and set out again early to-morrow morning. You will come with us, will you not?"

"Señorita——"

"How? do you mean to refuse?"

"But I——"

"I understand," replied the pretty creole, tapping the floor with her foot; "you are angry with me still."

"No, upon my honour."

"Well then, come."

"My dear cousin, how can I? I came to America to earn a living for myself. My people are far from rich, except in a good old name, and I must make up for the blindness of fortune by my labours."

"Very good! But tell me, did you not come here in hopes of finding my father?"

"Yes."

"And did you not hope to be advanced by him?"

"Certainly."

"Then it is as clear as daylight. Children succeed to their father's duties as well as to their rights. When you were a relation of his, are you not a relation of mine too? My cousin, don't be so proud, I entreat, or you will give me pain. Do you wish to work? In my house, there is plenty for you and others to do. My uncle here, who is so kind as to look after my interests, remarked the other day how much we wanted a clever, painstaking man, who would superintend the field work, keep things in order, and so on. He can explain matters better to you than I can. We are women, and all we know about property, is to spend the money it brings in. You see then, the arrival of a relation like you, who won't regard our interests like a hireling, is a perfect god-send."

"I understand," replied Corrado, who did not exactly see the advantage of having a relation for steward, rightly judging that it is not easy to order one's relations about; "I understand, and am much obliged."

"Then you accept."

"I should like to accept, to show my gratitude. But there is a prior claim on me. You see, my cousin, when I arrived here, poor, with no prospects, almost at my wits' end, this excellent old gentleman to whom I applied for advice, did what was better; for he took me to live with him entirely out of kindness to me, and he has treated me like his own son."

"Certainly, Signor Corrado, certainly, because you deserve it," cried the old Genoese, cutting off his shop-boy's retreat in this way. "But we mustn't be selfish, and it would be selfish in me to accept your sacrifice. My dear boy, when fortune comes our way we should seize it by the forelock. Only this morning it seemed a good opening for you to stay with me, in hopes some day of being the owner of this shop. Now that you have better prospects, it would be folly. So if this is the only reason that makes you hesitate to accept, you mustn't let it weigh with you. I am old, certainly, but I have laid my plans, and I mean to remain here till I am a hundred. So I have thirty-five years to spare, waiting for some other young fellow to inherit my counter and shelves."

"Ah, what an excellent—may I ask your name?"

"Giovan Battista Rivara, at your service."

"Signor Rivara," continued the young lady, "you are chivalry itself. We must be friends."

And drawing off the glove on her pretty hand, she held it out to the old provision dealer, who took it without hesitation.

"Come then, my cousin," added the creole; "your place is ready for you, and the advantage is on our side."

With these words, she held out the same hand which had just been grasped by Signor Bacciccia. There was no glove to spoil now; he had his master's example, and Nunziata Palmanova's lover had no excuse for drawing back.

Ah! women, women, you are far cleverer than we are; when you want a thing done, neither man nor devil can hinder it.

"Thank you!" replied Corrado, in the meantime, with a courteous bow.

"Then, cousin, dress yourself, and come with us."

The young fellow thought of his sailor's clothes, horribly out of keeping with his cousin's carriage, her Brussels lace, and her Parisian dress.

"If you will allow me," he said then, "I will remain for to-day with my friend and benefactor. To-morrow, at any hour you please, I shall be at your service, cousin."

"As you please," replied the creole. "We are at the Albergo di Leon, Calle Buena Vista. We start at eight; don't we, uncle? Therefore, we expect you at six. It is a beautiful route, in a delicious valley, along the Rimac. Do you know the Rimac?"

"Only the little I have seen of it here at the mouth," said Corrado.

"Ah, when you look down on it, as we get nearer

to the hills! The valley of the Rimac has been called by one of our poets, the girdle of the American Venus, a silver girdle, studded with emeralds. The American Venus, I need hardly say, is Lima, the 'Ciudad de los Reyes.' You will see, Cousin Altavilla, what a beautiful journey we shall have; beautiful even in the rugged parts, where we cross the Cordillera of the Andes, under the snowy peak of Sasaguanca, to reach Magdalena, on the left bank of the Tunguragua, where our estates are situated."

The old lady was silent, and from time to time nodded her head in assent. She was an Englishwoman, stranded in some way or other at Lima; a little prim, but good-hearted, and much attached to her young mistress.

The old uncle was—an old uncle, but of the penniless species. He had lived in the family for twenty-five years; he had, as the saying is, seen his niece born, and on his cousin's death he had been left guardian of the last offshoot of the house of Zuniga; a guardian who loved the girl as if she were his own, and indulged her in all her freaks, without a word of remonstrance. He, too, assented in silence. Had he not already, without a murmur, taken a five days' journey, because Signora Speranza wished to see the Duke of Melito, her noble and exiled cousin. We may picture him to ourselves like the prime minister of the Queen of Sheba, when that Arabian potentate took it into her head to pay her respects to the wisest of kings, with his seven hundred wives and three hundred favourites. Speranza Zuniga herself was a sort of sovereign, and reigned despotically (but it was

an enlightened despotism, as people say now) over those two creatures who were growing old about her.

And who knows (for power is certainly intoxicating), who knows whether the lovely Queen of Tunguragua did not wish to reign over a third? Certainly, if the idea had taken shape, it was of new growth; but it is of the nature of ideas to grow quickly, and the thoughts of girls make a good deal of way during twenty-four hours.

For the present, there was nothing in Speranza Zuniga's conduct, except what she had confessed to herself, namely, a feeling of kindliness unmixed even with curiosity. She had made a mistake in writing that rather tart letter to a poor relation, and she wished to make the *amende honorable*. Besides, she had to go to Lima from time to time to keep herself from growing perfectly wild in the country. This time her expectations were small, and the result was to correspond. But how could she bring herself to spend a fortnight in town? Corrado Altavilla had come to America to work; neither could she leave him idling about the streets of Lima, nor yet leave him as a shop-boy for a week or two.

After all, if Speranza Zuniga had not to give account of her actions to her relations, why should she have to do so now to my readers, not even neighbours of hers? Let us take her as she is, without any more discussion.

The following morning, Corrado made his appearance. He had written a long letter to Naples, letting them know of his journey into the country. He was to be a bailiff, he was going to see rice grown, and

cocoa, coffee, and sugar cane, cotton, tobacco, and nutmeg; to cut down ebony, cedar, and iron wood; to collect valuable gums, dragons' blood for druggists, gum to give a lustre to certain stuffs; to shear the vigogna and the alpaca; to hunt the otter, and so on.

He made a bundle of his effects, took leave of Signor Rivara, received a blessing from Signora Mariguita, who had thrown away her cigarette at an early hour, before it was burnt to a stump, and went off to the Albergo di Leon in the Calle di Buena Vista. Like him, Speranza Zuniga had risen early, and was looking out for his arrival from the balcony of her room.

CHAPTER XIX.

SPERANZA ZUNIGA.

CORRADO was received and welcomed like an old acquaintance.

The post carriage having made its appearance at the door of the Albergo, they settled themselves into it, and departed without any regret from the "Ciudad de los Reyes." The road was perfectly delightful with its canals proceeding from the Rimac, crossing the valley in all directions, giving verdure everywhere and making it a perfect earthly paradise.

Speranza Zuniga felt and loved (which, from the days of Dante, is the real way of understanding things) the poetry of all this beauty. Indolent personally, as almost all creoles are, she, on the other hand, was active and quick-witted, and her youthful imagination was never at rest. Lying back, almost buried in the soft cushions of the carriage, with her cousin seated opposite to her, she was really charming.

Sometimes she chose to alight, and to go a little

way on foot. Corrado was a cousin, and no one could object if, at such times, she took his arm.

And then, they had most friendly chats, these two, almost infantile. Speranza wanted to know what her Cousin Margherita was like. Corrado had a photograph of his sister with him, and showed it to their American cousin.

"How beautiful she is!" exclaimed Speranza. "And how like you!"

Corrado smiled at this innocent outburst, very pleasing, moreover, to his ears, as it also was to see his fair cousin bestowing a kiss on the photograph. Then she insisted on seeing what his father was like, and could hardly look long enough at these portraits of her distant kindred, nor grow weary of hearing the most minute particulars about their life in Naples, that paradise of Italy. Already she knew Naples as well as Lima, or nearly so. She had read many travels, and seen photographs of the city, the bay, and its neighbourhood. She talked of Pompeii and Pozzuoli as if she had seen them only yesterday.

The thing was true to a certain extent. Corrado did not know that in a certain portmanteau there was a collection of books about Italy, and particularly about Naples; and that his fair cousin had spent the half of the preceding day in collecting these books, and the other half in looking through them in the retirement of her room in the hotel. This was out of courtesy to Corrado, who knew nothing at all about it, but was none the less grateful to his cousin, whom he found so very much better informed about his native land than he was himself, though he had been brought up there.

He, on his part, had many questions to ask about Magdalena. And here, while they were talking about Speranza's property, her uncle, Don José Garcia di Morena, often put in a word. Corrado listened to him with the greatest attention, as he did not like arriving in a state of complete ignorance, and he felt as if he ought to take advantage of these five days spent on the journey in trying to understand the details of his future work.

At these times Speranza gave up chattering, and listened to her uncle with all her ears, as if her attention would be some help to Corrado. It was a kind of talk that had always bored her a little, though she had never shirked it, except by letting her attention wander on all occasions of the kind. But that was not the case here ; her cousin must be *au fait* in everything, if he was to do what he had undertaken to every one's satisfaction. And for the first time this little Queen of Tunguragua took an interest in knowing the profits of the coffee plantation and the sugar crop, how many pounds of wool and how many otter skins were sent every year to the Lima market, and how many days it took to make the rounds of her immense property.

"My poor cousin!" she said, "how tiresome it will be for you to exchange Neptune's steeds for Magdalena horses, and to be looking after all these details!"

"Never fear; I shall be the less easily tired," replied Corrado. "Moreover, since my boyish days I have felt as much at home in a saddle as on this seat, and not in such good company as I have here."

The travellers spent the first night in a country inn; the second, at a country seat belonging to a friend of the Zunigas. At the third station, they found a troop of servants from Magdalena, waiting for their mistress. Corrado remarked with pleasure that his cousin must be very good to her people, as all their demonstrations showed so much gratitude and affection.

The evening of the fifth day they came in sight of Magdalena, a perfect oasis in the desert on the banks of the Tunguragua. The house, from an architectural point of view, was unpretending; but it was large, and looked more like a collection of houses, interspersed with courtyards, and with verandahs all round, affording accommodation for a large family of retainers. One wing of the building, a little higher and painted green, showed plainly that it was the quarters of the proprietor. The outside was scrupulously clean, but the inside was really splendid, a dwelling fit for princes. All the comforts of life, all the magnificence of modern European luxury, a combination of fitness and beauty for which all parts of the globe had been laid under contribution, adorned the abode of the Zunigas. And if on the journey during the weary crossing of the Andes it seemed incomprehensible why Christians had ever thought of burying themselves there, once you had arrived it seemed quite comprehensible that a family might live all the year without the smallest wish to leave this happy corner of the world.

Corrado, with senses educated to feel what was beautiful, did ample justice to Magdalena, and rejoiced

heartily, as any young fellow in his circumstances might, to have lighted on, and to be employed in, such an earthly paradise. But, alas! even the first parents of insatiable mankind were not satisfied to live in Eden; therefore, you can imagine that before long Corrado began to weary of his Eden too, he who had not even flesh of his flesh to keep him company. And there, in the midst of all this loveliness, with his occupations to interest him, and notwithstanding all the attention of his hosts, he felt himself alone, cut off from the world, like Robinson Crusoe on his desert island.

He made long expeditions on horseback every day, from one end of Speranza's property to the other; generally alone, or followed by a servant, who attended to his orders and kept at a respectful distance. And these solitary rides gave him pleasure, because he could sigh as much as he liked, and build castles in the air, and sometimes even roar like a wild beast, and curse his hard fate.

The rising and setting of the sun renewed his grief in different ways, but the setting was much worse than the rising. In the morning, when he went out through the fields, with the breeze and the sunshine came a salutation from his beloved ones far away in the east. In the evening, returning weary from his day's work, he saw the plain to the east growing dark, and the sun going rapidly down behind the bare summits of the Cordilleras, whence no friendly voice came to greet him.

How long should he remain there, gazing idly at the boundless plains, sighing beside the winding

streamlet—the source of the gigantic Amazon—that in due time would find its way to the ocean, into those very waters which, after traversing an innumerable number of leagues, and changing their name many times, were to touch the blessed shores of Italy? Of his position at Magdalena nothing yet has been said. Was he a poor relation, picked up out of charity, or was he a hireling, who, by the labour of his hands, might make a fortune and return to his own land? He knew nothing, neither did he venture to ask. They were all so kind to him. Every evening when he came home he found his pretty cousin as attentive to him as on the very first day he had seen her. If she were reading, she put away her book at once, and would not take it up again, let him say what he liked. If she were seated at the pianoforte, she left off in the middle of a sonata to chat to him, or she began something else which she knew Corrado preferred. After supper there were long *séances* under the verandah to enjoy the evening air, or in the meadows beyond the house, to have, as she expressed it, a moonlight bath.

Once she chose to accompany her cousin through the fields. Her Uncle Moreno would have escorted her, but she said if he chose he might stay at home, as Corrado was quite sufficient for her protection. The indolent creature rode with the gracefulness of a savage; on horseback she looked like a different person, a modern Amazon, so daring and fearless. A curious combination of masculine and feminine qualities, Speranza Zuniga could not tolerate indifference from any one, even from one who had no

heart to bestow on her. One felt, after spending two or three days in her company, that in this pretty, unsophisticated creature one could have either a lover, a comrade, both grave and gay, a sister, or a trusty friend. There was so much variety in her; so many good qualities and so many amiable weaknesses in this specimen of primitive womankind.

In the meantime Uncle Moreno had become resigned to this freak of his niece's, and the three horses were standing saddled in front of the door before the sun had appeared above the horizon. Their destination was a field, but lately brought under cultivation, at the northern extremity of Speranza's property. There was the new factory to be inspected, and the little Queen of Tunguragua was to take possession of this new jewel, just added to her other dominions.

The sky was splendid, and promised a most beautiful day. Speranza, graciously accepting the knee offered by her courteous cousin as a substitute for a stool, jumped lightly and gracefully into her saddle. She was beautiful to behold on her black horse, that answered (as far as a horse can answer) to the romantic name of Hernani. Her long grey riding-habit, and hat with broad turned-up brim, trimmed with three peacocks' feathers, were most becoming Corrado rode beside her, on a bay horse with a white star on its forehead—the best in the stable, which Speranza had, soon after his arrival at Magdalena, arranged should be his.

They were scarcely out of the courtyard before they set off at a trot along the cart track, leaving Don José remaining behind like Sancho Panza on his expe-

ditions with his hot-headed master. The two young people had to stop at every turn to allow their tardy companion to come up with them.

"My dear children," said Uncle Moreno, as soon as he had recovered his breath, "I am no longer a young fellow of twenty! Happy those who are! Thrice happy those who can remain like one! As for me, I swear by the head of my steed, as soon as we arrive at Agua Fria I shall rest myself under a tree, with a pipe, and say *au revoir* to you till the evening."

"Oh, naughty uncle!" exclaimed the girl, playfully. "Always at that horrid pipe!"

"The last of my friends, dear," replied Don José, with the greatest philosophy; "and it will be so to the end, I hope, if it doesn't break in my hands."

"You don't smoke, Corrado?"

"No, cousin. Since my infancy I knew it was an expensive habit, and I have never indulged in it. And you?"

"I have smoked sometimes. I am Spanish, and the papelito tempted even me. However, it gives me no pleasure now, I won't smoke any more."

"Out of economy?" Corrado asked, laughing.

"Well, why not? You know, I bought so many books the last time I was in Lima, that my uncle wanted to know if I were going to turn hermit."

"And all Italian books!" added her uncle. "But you won't have patience to learn the language!"

"Ask Corrado. Am I not making some progress, cousin?"

"Yes, certainly; far more than I am making in Spanish."

"Ah, yes! But don't you know that you are not very quick, Cousin Altavilla? You don't care for Spanish, and that's a sign that you don't care to stay very long in America."

Corrado looked a little grave at this unexpected rebuff and said nothing. Happily Uncle Moreno came to the rescue with this profound reflection—

"My dear, everybody has not so many hours of the day to spare as you have. Corrado is perpetually up and down through the place, and can't attend to his grammar."

"That's quite true," replied she. "But why do you give yourself so much trouble? Are you afraid that we might not be satisfied?"

"Señorita," said Corrado, trying to hide his real distress under a make-believe gravity, "duty before everything."

"Yes, and in the meantime we only see you for an hour in the evening."

"An hour? I come back at five, and then I have till ten to enjoy my masters' company."

"Have done with your masters, or I shall be really angry," cried Speranza, in a tone of annoyance. "Moreover, it was you who counted the hours, not I."

With this she struck her horse with the reins, and set off at a gallop.

"My dear Speranza, you must have had a restless night; there's no pleasing you. A little while ago it was my pipe, and now—look at her, Corrado! She is going like the wind. Be off after her, or she will come to grief. You have a better horse, or a horse with a better rider."

Corrado, who was a little dumbfoundered at this outburst on the part of his cousin, did not wait to be told twice, and put spurs to his horse to overtake her. The spirited creature flew over the ground, and in two minutes he was abreast of Hernani, who had no wish to leave his companions too far behind.

"My cousin, I implore you to listen to me," said Corrado. "What have I done to vex you?"

Speranza turned to look at him with a preoccupied air, but in her large black eyes there was a roguish expression.

"You? Nothing," she replied.

"But," said Corrado then, not knowing exactly what to say, "you left us just now in such a way——"

"Goodness!" exclaimed she. "Uncle José is so slow that I can't bear it. For the last quarter of an hour, with a kind of conversation that might go on for ever, you made me go at the pace of the Huanca doctor making the rounds of the factories. And, cousin, I don't like Hernani to get these bad ways."

"If that is all I have no more to say," replied Corrado, glad to get off so easily. "And if you have no objection, I shall go and tell Don José—I shall be back in a minute," he added, in dread of some tart reply, imminent, it appeared to him, from his cousin's sarcastic smile; "so have mercy on my horse, and don't put Hernani to a gallop again."

"I will be merciful," she said, with a malicious little laugh in place of the sarcastic smile, "and to give you time, I will go at the doctor's pace."

"Thank you," said Corrado again.

And with a low bow he turned his horse and galloped back towards the uncle as swiftly as he had gone in pursuit of the niece.

"It's nothing, Don José; it's nothing!" he cried to Moreno, as soon as he came near him. "Signorina Speranza was only joking. If you have no objection I shall go with her; we shall ride on slowly."

"Yes, yes; do as you like; you can wait for me at Agua Fria, not very far off. I am going at a gentle pace."

And suiting the action to the words, Uncle Moreno made his horse walk.

Corrado, as he had promised, flew after his pretty cousin, who, on her part, had pulled up her horse where he had left her, and remained standing, looking after him, like the beautiful Erminia looking at the crusaders' tents, and the banner of her beloved Tancred in the moonlight.

"You lost no time," she remarked, as soon as he was near enough.

"No. I shouted to him from half-way; he will overtake us at Agua Fria. Poor Don José, these excursions don't suit him exactly."

Speranza made no reply. She had turned to look towards the horizon in front of them. They were now on a rise in the road, and before them was spread out the valley of Tunguragua, looking much more extensive than it did from about Magdalena, and appearing even more imposing from a slight streak of golden haze, softening the outlines of the exquisite view. Here and there, where the light fell more strongly, a few bits of higher ground showed them-

selves, like islands of verdure with gleaming buildings, reminding one of the pagan temples with which landscape painters of the old school filled up the backgrounds of their pictures.

"See how beautiful it is!" exclaimed the girl, enthusiastically. "And do you really not care for our country?"

"But I do, my dear cousin. Why should you think that I don't care for it? One may have one's heart full of one's own land and yet do justice——"

"Ah!" interrupted she, "to do justice isn't much."

"Well then, love."

"Yes, that's better. It is a pretty word, don't you think so, cousin? I have remarked with much satisfaction that in many grammars this is the favourite word for examples."

"Of the conjugations," Corrado would fain have added, but he suppressed the joke as being too familiar, and quickly substituted another.

"My dear cousin, grammarians are men, though sometimes they don't seem to be."

"Ah, well done; I like that!" cried Speranza Zuniga. "Keep in good humour, Cousin Altavilla, and then I shall feel as if our solitude was not wearisome to you. And then solitude is so nice when one has a pretty house, a good horse, good books, and—a friend."

"That's to say, when you are no longer in solitude," remarked Corrado, quickly.

"That's true," she replied, laughing. "But I said solitude, in contradistinction to the hatefulness of a city. And what good is a city when we have all we want in

the country, all about us and for us? And now that we have this nice bit of level ground before us," said Speranza, in delight, "shall we gallop a bit?"

"With all my heart."

When Uncle Moreno at last arrived where this dialogue had been held, he saw no one, as you may imagine, but along the track a cloud of dust receding farther and farther as the two riders flew along.

"Happy creatures!" exclaimed Don José, "with their twenty years, which sit lighter on them than this panama on me. When they are seventy, I should like to see if they won't appreciate the delights of sitting still or lying stretched out under the shade of a tree. But," added Don José to himself, "shall I be alive to see this? The newspapers are full of cases of longevity, a hundred and twenty years and upwards, but in Europe these are set down as 'American news.'"

Revolving these thoughts in his mind, Don José let the reins fall on the horse's neck, who slackened his speed in a way that almost exceeded the blessed Ermolao, of whom people tell, as a great miracle, that one day he took three steps on one brick.

When our philosopher arrived at the factory, the "happy creatures" had dismounted some time before, while their horses had been fed and put under shelter. Corrado questioned the head of the little colony about the work done lately, and divers other matters. Speranza pretended to listen to this instructive conversation, and from time to time, by her gestures, gave her cousin to understand that there was something better to be done. In fact, Speranza, as indefatigable as an

Amazon, was meditating another race through the fields.

"Ah, here you are at last!" she cried, as she saw Don José appear under the gateway.

"Yes, thanks to Santo Jago di Compostella, the patron of travellers, here I am, and not fainting as you two must have been."

"Better still! Then you can escort us down there to see those ruins."

And she pointed as she spoke to an eminence at a considerable distance from the factory.

"Good gracious! And on foot! As I take it for granted that you will let the horses rest."

"Certainly. But it is no distance. About five hundred paces."

"Say a thousand, my dear child, a thousand."

"Well, let us say a thousand," replied Speranza, mimicking her uncle's tone. "A thousand paces at sixty per minute are—how many minutes, Cousin Altavilla?"

"Seventeen, or a little less," replied Corrado, after doing a little hasty mental arithmetic.

"You see, then, my dear uncle," continued Speranza, "it is nothing, and you could rest yourself quite well down there."

"Up there, my dear girl; *up* there, not *down* there. Indeed, I don't see any descent at all. Say no more; don't tempt me, siren! I must stop my ears."

"All right; and you will find wax in your pipe," remarked Speranza, nodding at the case which Don José was drawing out of his pocket.

Her uncle contented himself with giving a nod of

assent, and, opening the case, took out his trusty pipe, a large meerschaum, the *chef d'œuvre* of some Baruch, transplanted to Lima, who had enriched it with carvings like a Greek vase, or rather like a Chinese pagoda. Then, seating himself in a rustic chair, which the bailiff had placed under the overhanging eaves in a pleasant position, where he could have a little fresh air, Don José produced his tobacco pouch and match-box. The pagoda was soon smoking like a Mongibello, and sending up its grateful incense to the sky.

"I see," said Speranza; "you are not coming; we shall go by ourselves."

"Go then, children, go; I shall receive your archæological report here. Felipe, what are those ruins my niece is so anxious to inspect?"

"Signor," said the bailiff, "they are the remains of the hermitage of——"

But Speranza and Corrado were no longer there to hear Felipe's explanations, and were proceeding along the path as gaily as two children just out of school.

Don José, not feeling inclined for another expedition, had not miscalculated the distance. The ruins which had excited his niece's curiosity were on an eminence of no great height, but a kilometre distant from the factory, if not more.

And what were they? A poetical traveller might, from a distance, have taken them for the ruins of a Peruvian temple of Pacamac, the Sun-god of the Incas, the former sovereign of Peru. A more prosaic traveller might have considered them the remains of some fortress, erected by the successors of Pizzarro

or Almagro, to keep down the Carapachi and Omagui tribes, the remains of which survive in the neighbourhood, mingled with creoles, negro slaves, quadroons, and coolies, who form the bulk of the Peruvian population. If the two young people had remained a few minutes at the factory to hear Felipe's report, they would have heard instead that these were the remains of a hermitage of Friar Rodrigo di Acunha, a poor missionary of two hundred years ago, who had gone to inhabit the inhospitable bank of Tunguragua for the purpose of converting the rude, aboriginal worshippers of the Sun.

Through a mass of rubbish and undergrowth Corrado and Speranza reached the top of the little hillock, on which rose the remains of the hermitage. They recognized there what the building had been, from a cross which was still visible, painted red on the wall over the little door of the single room which served the friar as bed-room, reception-room, study, kitchen, and also, probably, sacristy. The chapel was alongside this room, with its roof fallen in; but the altar was still standing, with its consecrated stones, and a stump of split and blackened wood, the sole remains of the rustic cross which surmounted the communion table.

In this larger building the two young people were going to rest. Speranza was just about to sit down on the steps of the hermitage, when an exclamation from her cousin stopped her. Corrado had spied a bluish serpent issuing from a crack in the stones, looking suspiciously with its glittering eyes at the new-comers, in a way that boded no good.

But if the reptile was maligant, the man was strong, and could have taken its life with a blow before it had time to bite him in the leg. However, Speranza, a real daughter of Eve, had compassion on the serpent.

"Poor little thing!" she said; "let us spare its life."

"But, Speranza, it might be a venomous one?"

"Yes, they are so here, all of them," replied the creole; "but if you don't provoke them, they won't hurt you. See how pretty it is in its blue coat with white stripes, as if it had a hundred silver rings. And how confidently it stares at us! Certainly it trusts me; because, as for you, cousin, that rod of yours might seem to it like Mercury's caduceus."

In the meantime the serpent had wriggled itself a little away from them, and raised its head to look at them with a sort of good-natured curiosity, while it put out its sharp red tongue as if it had something to say.

Corrado and Speranza were following attentively the pretty, flexible movements of the reptile. When once you have got over the feeling of repugnance at every crawling thing, it is impossible to deny that these creatures are very graceful. Perhaps Speranza was thinking just then that, setting aside the question of size, this wriggling serpent would have made a pretty design for a bracelet, set with turquoises and pearls.

"Poor little thing!" repeated the girl. "It doesn't know the danger it was in just now from my dreadful cousin. You people in Europe hate serpents; and we do not. Perhaps because we are a young people.

For, you see, the very oldest people held them in great veneration, domesticated them, and took the greatest care of them, and in some places even set them on the altars, as an emblem of eternity."

"Eternity!" repeated Corrado, in whom this word gave rise to a new train of thought. "Eternity! this idea is our triumph and our misfortune. We wish everything to be eternal, and yet even these poor walls cannot resist the ravages of time."

"My dear cousin, everything of course is relative," said the girl. "I, for example, should be contented with an eternity that lasted—till death. Do you believe, at least, in an eternity where the affections are concerned?"

"Certainly!" said Corrado. And at the same time he gave a deep sigh.

"What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking of my own people so far away. When shall I ever see them again?"

"You are regretting Italy," remarked Speranza, sadly. "We can't even teach you a little patience!"

"Oh, I didn't mean that, cousin!" said Corrado, hastily. "How could I be so ungrateful, when you have been so kind to me, and treated me like a brother? But the new home which I have found on this side of the Atlantic makes me think all the more tenderly of the old one—in you I seem to see Margherita again; your uncle Moreno reminds me of my father; and I think I see them in their humble abode, sitting with tears in their eyes, wondering when they will see me again. This is weakness, I know, and unbecoming in a man—especially in a man who has

yet to make his way in the world. But what can I do? One can't change one's nature in a day, and our feelings will assert themselves."

"I see, I see," replied the girl; "and if this is all, we mustn't complain of a feeling which does you credit as a son and as a brother. But don't be uneasy; perhaps your absence from home may not be so long as you think. Look here," and she touched Corrado in a caressing way, "do you know that for some days I have had a plan in my head?"

"What is it?" asked Corrado, with feverish anxiety.

"To go to see your Italy, to pay my respects to your lovely Naples, to kiss my cousin Margherita and my cousin Signor Ruggero Altavilla."

"Oh, Speranza!" exclaimed Corrado, whose sole reply to this confidence was a violent start. "Hush, for pity's sake!"

"That serpent is listening," interrupted his cousin, with a malicious expression. "You see it is still there, the inquisitive thing! But, Cousin Altavilla, I have said nothing of this plan to my uncle, and I should not have told you, only you were looking so melancholy."

"Speranza, you are an angel," cried Corrado, in a sudden fit of gratitude and admiration.

"Without wings, though," remarked Speranza, shaking her head, and giving a little smile.

"That's true. And why? if you had wings you would be sure to give some consolation to a poor wretch like me."

"Who told you that?" she retorted. "Does not

Tom Moore tell of three angels who had wings, and yet they chose to stay on earth? But, if you had wings, you would soon be far away from here, would you not?"

"I don't know," said Corrado, rather put out by this unexpected reply. "Now, however, at any rate, I will wait patiently till you carry out your plan."

"Thank you!" said she, pressing his hand.

Corrado looked at his cousin at that moment, and he seemed to see something in her eyes which till then he had not suspected in the very least. Something she had said just now flashed into his mind, the meaning of which he had not perceived till now. "If this is all," Speranza had said. Now this squeeze of the hand and this steady look served as a commentary, and enlightened his mind, making him tremble lest he had guessed aright. Fearing? Yes, fearing. It is an ugly word, but the only one sufficiently expressive.

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE AND SORROW.

THE two young people returned in silence from the hermitage of Friar Rodrigo di Acunha, Speranza taking Corrado's hand as they came down the slope, because the path was greatly choked up with briars and stones. Going up it had seemed a small thing, but coming down, she had some trouble in making her way among the rather loose stones.

Corrado was lost in thought, and he had a good excuse for his silence, as he had to keep a careful look-out lest some unpleasant accident might happen. The sun was still high in the heavens, and the excessive heat had brought the serpents out of their holes. Speranza had no fears; all the same her cousin did not think it well to relax his vigilance.

Happily the way they had chosen was right enough; but Corrado did not breathe freely till they had reached the beaten path leading to the factory.

"What a horrid path!" exclaimed Speranza,

whose colour was considerably heightened under her clear brown skin. "It didn't look so bad at first."

"No, indeed," was Corrado's brief reply.

He would fain have appeared gayer, but this was not in his power, indeed the very effort of trying to hide his sadness made him graver than ever. And he had some reason to be grave, after the discovery which he thought he had made. What was to be done? What was he to say to his lovely cousin? How could he look her in the face and tell her that he was in love with another girl?

But then, why should he? If he were mistaken, would he not seem ridiculous? And if he were not mistaken, would it not be cruel? These doubts gave him no peace for the rest of the day. And it was this very day that his cousin had looked forward to with so much delight, expecting so much enjoyment for both of them. Not only that; it was the very day when, after so much painful uncertainty as to the duration of his exile, Corrado had heard from his cousin's lips that its termination was perhaps not so far off.

But at the same time, it was this unexpected announcement which made him guess the state of things. Why should his cousin, an American by birth, and passionately fond of Lima, why should she suddenly become so fond of Italy, and particularly of Naples? Such changes in a woman are always significant. They may seem capricious; they are, in fact, attached to a very fine thread, and if you look closely, this thread leads up to some beloved object.

For a little while, Speranza tried to banish her

cousin's melancholy, but soon gave up the attempt. Not that she was offended; whoever thinks so would be doing her wrong. Speranza was neither a fool nor a coquette, like many another; she was a woman worthy of having lived in the early ages of the world, and when she had shown her love, accepted her position simply, without a shade of affectation or reserve, and gave way freely to that feeling of adoration, the weakness, and, at the same time, the glory of a woman. Besides, Corrado, though out of spirits, but neither silent nor haughty, always tried to answer all she said. He was less lively, but he was certainly inclined to be more devoted and attentive than before.

In the meantime, she kept pondering what could have happened to her cousin to make him look so grave. A woman, already advanced in years, and in the experience of life, knows many things and can guess many others. The young woman, unacquainted with love affairs, has no experience to refer to but her own, no other mirror but her own innocent heart. And Speranza, thinking over Corrado's melancholy, thought only of one explanation—the affection which she herself was beginning to feel. And did Corrado not love her? Had he not said, "You are an angel," in a tone that came straight from his heart?

At Lima, a thoroughly Spanish city, and of course a place of much love-making, many tender words had been whispered to Speranza Zuniga, under cover of a compliment, in the intervals of a dance, or in the simple course of conversation. And who knows but that among these compliments the word "angel"

may have figured. But there are some ornaments which, when out of place, look mean and unsuitable; so there are expressions which, used at a wrong time, are annoying or ridiculous. Whereas these words of Corrado, in the quiet solitary spot, with their grateful tone, acquired a meaning quite new and serious, and very different from what their effect would have been in a ball-room.

Therefore, his pretty cousin came to the conclusion that Corrado was so absent in mind because his heart was filled with confused sounds, murmuring the name of a certain young lady. This was not Don José's view, who knew nothing about subtleties of this kind, and could hardly have believed them possible. He thought, instead, that the sun must have been playing some pranks with the young fellow. Everybody knows that the tropical sun is a mischievous creature; and the result seemed to confirm his theory, as on their way home to Magdalena Corrado began to feel very tired and his head very heavy. The following day he had an attack of fever.

The Huanca doctor, the nearest to Magdalena, was summoned in great haste; and he came, of course, at his usual gentle trot. Still, he was a worthy disciple of Galen; not particularly learned, but of considerable experience, and he had what is commonly called the doctor's eye. He inspected Corrado, felt his pulse, made most minute inquiries, and finally gave his opinion—quite the opposite of Don José. He declared that it was only some slight indisposition, most likely the effects of the air. All newcomers, and Europeans especially, had to pay this

small penalty to the climate of Upper Peru; that region where so many streams take their rise, discharging the same office to the river Amazon which the capillary veins do to the human system. He said many other edifying things in the same tone, unnecessary to repeat; finally, reassuring Speranza and her uncle as to this attack of Corrado's, and this was the main thing.

At Corrado's bedside, his pretty cousin established herself as nurse. This indolent being, whose custom it generally was to spend hours and hours in a hammock suspended between a couple of trees in the garden, never rested, never went to bed, till the worst part of the attack was over.

"My dear child, you will kill yourself," remonstrated her uncle.

"No, no; never fear, I am strong. If I felt inclined, I should go to sleep; but indeed I am not sleepy."

"Still, if you would just try a little, I would sit up one night in your stead."

"No, no; leave him to me and Lizzie (her companion); you men are no good under these circumstances."

For some years this self-willed creature had done exactly as she liked, and as usual no one could dissuade her.

In this way, Speranza, constantly with her cousin, was swallowing deep draughts of the delicious poison. He was the first man she had ever encountered under the poetical circumstances necessary to inspire a passion, according to her own youthful anticipations.

He was good-looking, noble, high-minded; intimacy had brought out all his charms; his illness, which necessitated Speranza spending so many hours day and night at his bedside, had given to her growing affection that motherly tone which always forms an inseparable element in the affections of women.

Corrado, subdued by fever, had not strength enough to object to his cousin's ministrations, and he resigned himself like an infant to her careful and affectionate nursing. He felt that he loved her as he loved his sister Margherita, and the least he could do for her was to let her see this. But when, with returning health, his feelings as to what was right and honourable made themselves felt, his unhappiness became excessive. He thought and thought how he was to let her know the state of his heart, and what ties bound him to Europe, though all the time he was aware that it was too late.

"Look here!" Speranza said to him one day, as she was busy over her embroidery in the drawing-room; while he, still weak, was resting in an armchair close by, and Miss Lizzie had left the room on some errand or another. "Yesterday I spoke to my uncle."

"What about?"

"Don't you remember the talk we had over there at Agua Fria, in the ruins of the hermitage?"

"But," stammered Corrado, "we talked of so many things."

"So many? I don't think so. But, at all events, I told him of our intended journey."

"Ah, yes! And what did he say?" Corrado asked, with a beating heart.

"That we should do well, of course. I expected that; Uncle José never contradicts me. So, cousin, you must make haste and get well. We shall go by the Panama railway, and then by the mail steamer straight to Europe. We shall land in England, visit Paris, and then, finally, proceed to Italy; to Italy, do you hear?"

"Can your uncle make up his mind to take so long a journey?" Corrado asked, at a loss how to change the conversation.

"He certainly did think it a little hard. Imagine, he has only been once in Europe, or, rather, you could hardly say he had been there. He was very young and landed at Cadiz without feeling the slightest wish to penetrate even to Madrid. Oh, Uncle José!" added Speranza with a laugh, "he wouldn't give this corner of America for the other four quarters of the globe. He is a thorough Peruvian, as his niece used to be, who, however, is so changed in this respect, that she hardly knows herself."

Corrado pretended not to understand.

"It is marvellous," he said, "how, with this way of thinking, Don José could make up his mind to move."

"Yes, quite marvellous," replied his cousin; "and he would gladly be excused, I assure you. But what can we do? People say that a girl can't go about alone. It is hard on us poor women! And I feel as if I could go to the ends of the earth!"

"Of course you could do it, cousin," Corrado remarked gravely; "you are rich, and you could surround yourself with all that a queen requires on

a journey. But, be he father, brother, husband, or servant, a lady requires to have some man or other with her."

"Then you think so too? Well, so be it," said Speranza, with a resigned nod of her head; "we are feeble and we require some one to lean on. Ah, if we could only satisfy my uncle!" she added with a sigh, as she bent her head lower over her embroidery frame.

"Satisfy your uncle!" repeated Corrado, who understood nothing this time; "and how?"

"Why—by leaving him in his nest," she replied, blushing. "Oh, after all, we are feeble creatures, but we owe something to truth," she continued, as if speaking to herself. "Corrado, look me straight in the face. I have changed a little, have I not?"

"Yes, indeed, cousin," he stammered, "your face is burning——"

"That's modesty," replied Speranza, with the quick determination of one who rushes forward lest he should repent half way; "but to-day I must be daring. Don't think me foolish or unwomanly, I entreat. I have something serious to say to you. I must, I wish to be open with you, and to tell you all —yes, all—looking you calmly in the face as if you were my uncle."

At these words of his cousin's, Corrado trembled in spite of himself. He was under fire; he already heard the cannon roar; in fact, the first grape shot was whistling about his head. So he did what any young soldier would do who knows his duty, and with a "Patience, Corrado, here we are," courageously faced the attack.

"You?" said he, interrogatively. "What serious thing can you have to say to me, cousin?"

"Really," replied Speranza, with a hesitation which seemed studied, but was in reality natural, "it is an audacious step on my part. It is strange, or, at least unusual, for a woman—in short, that I should be the first to speak. But here, too, my affection put an end to my doubts. You are so honourable, that perhaps, lest you should do anything ungentleman-like, you would not venture to speak to me, and I might wait for your confession for a good while. A little while ago you alluded to my wealth, and really you gave me pain."

"And how so, pray?"

"Because I am afraid that this is your reason for holding back. Wealth is horrid if it robs our best friends of their courage. Tell me, Corrado, is this what you think; at least tell me, so far, whether you have only looked on me as the wealthy heiress of the Zunigas, or, as my uncle says in jest, the Queen of Tunguragua."

"I," replied Corrado, "look on you simply as my kind-hearted cousin."

"Ah! not much better!" she exclaimed. "Well then, cousin, take courage like me, blush as I do, be candid and honest, even though it should be unpleasant for me to hear; what is your opinion of me?"

Though prepared for the assault, this inexperienced soldier staggered under the blow, given point blank.

"How do you mean, cousin?" he asked, drawing a long breath.

"Well," she said, trying to hide her confusion with a sudden turn, "as a gentleman thinks of a lady."

Corrado said nothing for a few minutes, centuries to both of them.

"That you are an angel," he began, hesitatingly. "I told you so already——"

"Yes, I know; but let us keep to lower ground, please. Leave the angels in heaven, and think of me as I am. Don't you see?" she added, tapping the floor with her foot, as if she were angry with herself. "I must have more courage than you—and I feel that I am wrong."

With these words she bent her head and rested her forehead against the embroidery frame, to conceal from Corrado the tears that were in her eyes.

Corrado looked at her for a moment and sighed; but the sigh was interrupted as his feelings overpowered him, and he suddenly burst into tears.

"I understand you, I am afraid!" he muttered at last, trying to keep back his tears.

Speranza raised her head and looked at him in a stupefied sort of way.

"Afraid!" she said, repeating the strange word.

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I don't know what I am saying," replied Corrado, with a supplicating gesture. "I beg your pardon, cousin; I am a fool. But why should I make any mystery? I am afraid—yes, afraid—because I am in a predicament."

"Ah! my heart told me so, and I wouldn't listen to it!" cried Speranza, suddenly jumping us. "You are in love with some one else, Corrado."

He made her no answer, but his embarrassment,

his down-cast eyes, and the deadly paleness of his face, spoke plainly enough.

Speranza put her hand on her heart as if she had received a sudden stab, and with some difficulty restraining her tears, with colourless cheeks, and half-closed eyes, she left the room. Corrado, rooted to his chair, saw her passing through the window opening on to the verandah, and hastening towards the garden. In a few moments she had disappeared among the trees, but not before he had seen how her composure had given way as she put her handkerchief to her eyes, with a gesture of despair.

"Ah, what a wretch I am!" he exclaimed, wringing his hands with all his might. And yielding to his instinct of affectionate concern, he hurried after the unhappy girl.

Speranza heard his hasty steps, and quickly dried her tears; but her sobs were beyond her control.

"Listen to me, cousin," he said gently to her.

But she walked on without a word.

"Listen to me, Speranza!" continued Corrado, in a tone of entreaty, as he caught her hand and made her stop. "I was a boy then, almost a child, when I made her acquaintance. Could I think—could I foresee the future? Will you blame me? Is it my fault if this is my destiny?"

At these words, Speranza turned round towards him, looking at him steadily.

"And—she loves you?" she asked, slowly articulating the words, at the same time freeing her arm from his grasp. "Don't be afraid to tell me the truth, Corrado. Does she love you?"

"I believe so," he replied, in much embarrassment.

"How has she shown it?"

Corrado was silent.

"Come, tell me; how has she shown it?" persisted Speranza. "Would she follow you to America? Perhaps she is in Lima?"

Corrado made a negative motion with his head.

"Then she let you go alone?" continued Speranza. "She let you cross the Atlantic? She allowed you to put a thousand miles of distance and dangers between her and you? Well then, cousin, you are too young, and you don't know us women yet. But mark my words, I may be less artful, but I am more candid than others. Don't believe in the love of a woman who allows you to go far away from her. If she told you she loved you, she was deceiving you; if you believe her it's your own wish to be deceived, and you deserve it."

"Speranza, don't, don't accuse her. She has a father—she is an only child, very rich—and—I——"

"Better still," interrupted Speranza; "she is a hypocrite too, and a vile one. Now, let me speak, whether you take offence or not. She is rich, an only daughter; she loves you and she lets you go; she hasn't a word with which to melt her father's heart, to keep you with her, to say to you: 'Sacrifice your pride; love must be the strongest?' I can imagine the whole thing—you saying, 'I am poor, I will make my fortune and come back to you!' That is fine and noble and grand on your part; but what sort of a woman would accept such a sacrifice? Is

that the way Europeans love? Are your Italian girls like that? Really, my idea of them was quite different. And tell me," she added, after a short pause, "has she written to you?"

"Never," replied Corrado, looking down, embarrassed.

"And your sister Margherita knows her?"

"Yes; they are friends."

"And has she written to you about her?" continued Speranza, in the style of an inquisitor.

"Yes, once," stammered Corrado; "that's all," smothering a sigh at the same time.

Speranza asked no more. She stood considering, looking straight before her, like a person lost in thought and oblivious to all around. Corrado respected her silence, and stood waiting without a word.

Within that pretty head a great battle was being waged, and logic must have won the day—a full and complete victory—for the young lady, returning to the matter in question, broke out confidently—

"This girl doesn't love you. I know what I am talking about, Corrado. I know that in this matter I am not blinded by passion. This girl thought she loved you, just as she was fond of her doll. Now she doesn't care for you any more. Even that childish kind of love is at an end."

Corrado looked down much mortified. He felt that in strict logic his cousin probably was right; at the same time, he felt that his heart was breaking.

Just at first he made no reply, but he felt that

his silence must be displeasing to Speranza, who in the meantime had sunk into a rustic chair, and motionless, with her eyes on the ground, looked like the picture of desolation.

Putting his own grief aside, he went up to her to continue the conversation.

"You are displeased with me, Speranza?" he asked, in a subdued voice.

"No," she replied, rousing herself, "you are a loyal fellow, Corrado, and I am a perfect baby. You must forgive my over haste. However," she added immediately, raising her pretty head proudly, "I am not sorry that I have been daring enough to tell you all this. Is it not better to know one's own fate?"

"Oh, Speranza, what are you saying?" he stammered, in confusion. "Don't try to make me think that I have been anything to you."

"No, no," she said, emphatically; "I know what I am saying, cousin. But let me tell you this, too. Speranza Zuniga will be worthy of you. What a European girl is like, you know," she continued in a tone of the greatest bitterness; "now you will see what an American can be."

And with that she jumped up and held out a hand to Corrado, which as he took it was burning and trembling.

"If this girl," continued Speranza, trying to suppress the emotion which kept her from speaking; "if this girl whom you say—by the way, what's her name?"

Corrado hesitated before replying. He was afraid of adding to his cousin's distress.

"Her name!" persisted the girl; "can you not bear to tell me?"

"Oh, Speranza," he exclaimed, in a tone of reproof.

"Well, then," she replied, before he had time to say anything more, "her name!"

"Annunziata," he said, in a low voice.

The sound of the name of her unknown rival cost Speranza a pang. What's in a name? Nothing. Still, all her life Speranza Zuniga never could hear that name again without a pang, as if she felt the stab for the first time.

"Well," she said then, "if this Annunziata loves you, you will marry her, and I will go to your wedding. May I?"

She tried to continue in the same tone, but it was more than she could bear; she fell back in the seat, sobbing and covering her face. Poor Corrado hardly knew where he was, nor what he ought to say. If at that moment Miss Lizzie or Don José had shown themselves he could not have kept up appearances, and no doubt would have knocked his head against a tree to save himself from answering.

"Speranza! my dearest cousin!" he cried at last, throwing himself on his knees at her feet, "forgive me!"

"Go now; go, please," she replied in a trembling voice. "Some one might come to look for us."

"How am I to leave you all alone here, crying like this? It would be inhuman."

"But what sort of a man are you?" burst forth Speranza, both lips and eyes betraying all the bitterness she felt. "Let me cry! Ah, do you

think Americans are of stone or iron? Accustomed to milk-and-water goddesses, do you think that we, and we alone, are made of marble? Weakmindedness and resignation are great beauties in them, and we have no right to feel! Go, go, I tell you, and let me cry in peace!"

On this Corrado, with an exclamation of despair, took himself off, tearing his hair as if he were the greatest villain in the world. Speranza drew a long breath. Now she could relieve her feelings and give vent to her wrath.

"Good God!" she cried, raising her tearful eyes to heaven; "what have I done to be punished in this way? What is that girl compared to me? That timid, hypocritical creature, who hasn't courage to confess her love, and is happy enough with distant admiration; while I, who wouldn't have hesitated for a moment, I, who would have faced every obstacle courageously, I am rejected! And for women like that men sacrifice everything; they don't care how they trample on some one else! Oh, it is a miserable world! And I understand, I understand now, only too well, holy virgins, how your hearts, full and overflowing with affection, could not belong to any man! Your boundless affections you consecrated to God, after long and desperate struggles, because men were not worthy of them."

And so she went on, impelled by the passion which filled her breast. The hot Spanish blood was boiling in her veins; she felt like three different characters—Inez de Castro, Ximena, and Santa Teresa—all in one.

"Look!" she went on, provoked at what she had been wishing for just now. "He is gone; he is gone! And he leaves me here, here, in my humiliation, after betraying all the greatest secrets of my heart. And is there no compassion anywhere? Is there no feeling left in the world? Good God, let me die! have pity on me!"

And once more she threw herself on the rustic seat as if she could not tear herself away. The fountain of her tears was flowing still.

In the meantime, some one was approaching with hasty steps. Speranza paid no heed; she was so absorbed in her own grief. The steps were Corrado's. His kind heart would not allow of his obeying his cousin's orders.

"No," he said, hurrying towards her; "I must not, I cannot leave you like this. You must suffer, Speranza; but forgive me, or I shall die at your feet!"

And falling on his knees, he seized her hand before she could prevent him, and bathed it with his tears.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RETURN.

THE autumn of 1869 was drawing to a close, and the flower of the aristocracy of Naples were assembled at a fraternal banquet (as it is called) in the Unione Casino, between the gardens of the Palazzo Reale and the Teatro San Carlo.

What was the solemn occasion which brought all these young gentlemen together, and these old gentlemen living like young ones in the most aristocratic place of resort in Naples? I might devote five or six pages to the subject, and yet put off the satisfaction of your reasonable curiosity to the next chapter. But I shall be so obliging as to tell you at once. These gentlemen were sacrificing at the altar of friendship, a genial divinity, who likes a cook for high priest, and for an altar a table laid for dinner.

The table was laid out with a taste and display most certainly wanting at the feasts of Sardanapalus or Belshazzar, the two greatest gourmands of olden times. Candlesticks of gilt bronze, china vases, con-

fectionary, and a display of glasses like a perfect park of artillery in front of each guest formed a dazzling spectacle. In the centre towered a huge Mercury in bronze, the traveller's god, with one foot in the air and the other barely touching the ground, a faithful copy of an antique bronze. At the sides, or more exactly at the ends of the table, were two smaller statues representing Abeona and Adeona, the gods of departure and return among the Romans. You may remember that we are at Naples, a few steps from Herculaneum and Pompeii, with the finest museum of Roman antiquities under the sun, and with specimens of antique work continually before our eyes.

From all these particulars you will have guessed that this stately banquet was being held in honour of an arrival. One of the guests, raising his glass of foaming champagne, had alluded to the return of Cæsar from Gaul—all in keeping with antique decoration. But as the reader can hardly be expected to believe that Cæsar had come to life again in Naples in the year 1869, I must add that under this classical name a compliment was paid to Don Renato Altavilla, just returned from Paris, after having been in London, in Belgium, in Holland, and perhaps farther still.

Renato being present, it follows as a matter of course, that at this dinner at the Unione there were assembled all the guests of the Frisio rock, whose acquaintance we have already made at the beginning of our story. These and some others made up the number of thirty in all.

Except to those who knew him intimately, the

Duke of Melito was changed almost past recognition. Scarcely six months had passed since he had taken his departure, and his face looked six years older.

Let us picture him then to ourselves as a man over thirty years of age, with the career of a deputy, and the blissful state of matrimony open to him, both desirable, as you know, or can easily imagine. He was very grave, but all the more agreeable, and if the smile so frequently on his lips was a little stereotyped, in no other way was the effort, which it cost him, visible. Speaking generally, without knowing all he had suffered, one might say that Don Renato Altavilla had left Naples as a youth, and returned a grown-up man.

Alas, who cares, or who can look below the surface, to find out what it costs to become men? And how sad it is to be no longer young! Those thirty gentlemen of all ages had been delighted, as they might well be, to show their satisfaction "at seeing one of its brightest ornaments restored to Neapolitan society." And he too, the ornament in question, had tried to make a suitable return to so many proofs of affection. His spirits were scarcely in tune, but he had done his best, and that was a good deal; nor were his hosts men who tried too carefully to distinguish between the reality and the appearance, when toasts were being drunk and champagne was foaming in their glasses.

Curious wine, champagne! just the thing to inebriate you a little for a short time, a genuine inebriation in respectable people, about enough to make you see the table four times as long as it really is, and your opposite

neighbour to seem half a kilometre off, or to make you reply courageously to a speech which you have not understood, or to save you from the shame of remembering what you have said. Not that all of them had reached this stage. For one, Signor Garantini, had kept his head, as that evening he had to go on with his reading for a legal congress. And Antonio Carafa, who happened by chance to be sitting beside him, had also steeled himself against the temptations of the four or five glasses ranged up beside his plate. Nothing has so strong an influence over us as the example of a sympathetic neighbour.

Antonio Carafa was saddened by the impression which Renato's gravity was making on him. Till now the two friends had said nothing about Renato's old love affair, though they had been already three days in Naples, and had met every day. Both had instinctively avoided the subject for fear of opening an old wound.

"Poor Renato!" whispered Antonio to his neighbour. "They are jabbering about all sorts of things round him, and he is quite bewildered. He is trying to smile, but look how grave his face becomes immediately. I fear our poor friend returns worse than when he went away."

"If he hasn't mended yet he will mend now," replied Garantini, like a man very sure of his game.

"You think so?" Carafa asked, who was by no means so certain. "It is an affair where the heart is concerned, and hearts——"

"And hearts recover like everything else," interrupted the lawyer; "provided it isn't aneurism."

"Good God, what a monster!"

"My dear Antonio, at one time I wasn't; but I have become such. One sees so many things in this world. And one learns something every day, according to the proverb. Besides, the girl has got over it, hasn't she?"

"Got over it? She? Margherita?"

"Yes, certainly, Margherita. I could not have believed it either, if her father hadn't assured me of it. 'My daughter,' he says, 'thinks as little of that impostor of a Duke of Melito, as I do of bearing the empty title won in this lawsuit against my respected relations.' And he added besides, that his beautiful daughter would probably soon be married."

"How strange!" exclaimed Antonio. "And do you think of saying anything to Renato? Who knows but that this piece of news, carefully broken to him, might do him more good than the five months' absence?"

"Certainly it might, indeed," replied Garantini. "But if he doesn't ask me about anything, I can't tell him anything. Has he talked about these matters to you?"

"No; and I have taken good care not to begin."

"Really! Then perhaps he is cured after all. And in that case, the remedy might be not only useless, but possibly it might have an opposite effect. Don't you think so?"

"Quite so," replied Carafa; "and God grant that I may be mistaken."

Our readers may perhaps remember how Antonio had become aware of Renato's attachment. Without

taking much heed he had seen it beginning; on closer observation he had seen it come to an end. He had watched by his friend's bedside when Renato was overcome and almost killed by the overthrow of all his hopes; and the revelations of Garantini, become necessary if they were to find out any way of helping him, had revealed to him all the greatness of mind of one who, up till then, had only appeared to him in the light of a good, obliging young fellow. He could very well understand that in Ruggero Altavilla's eyes, appearances were against Renato; but he could never imagine a change having come over Margherita, such a superior girl, who had inspired his friend with one of those strong affections which, to make use of an old metaphor, are strong enough to conquer death. Nevertheless, she had changed. Antonio had been proceeding along under full sail through the world of dreams, amidst visions of epic grandeur and wonderful instances of faith, almost superhuman, and behold a jesting remark of Garantini's had rudely awakened him, and revealed an affection of the commonplace kind.

"Better so," he reflected, after giving a sigh to his beautiful vanished dream. "Renato is a man, and he will get over it. But what sort of women are there now-a-days?"

The gay company had left the dining-room to proceed to the billiard-room, and to have their coffee there. A "corda" had been proposed, and Renato, with a good grace, had acceded to the wishes of his friends. He had done more; at the first turn, he was among the wounded; at the third, he was dead. This cost

him a toll, paid to the custom-house on his return to his native land; but he recovered his liberty at the same time; and this was the more acceptable, as it permitted him to retire into a corner and chat with Garantini and Carafa, who were not playing. Carafa, because he did not like that sort of game; Garantini, because he was just going, as his hour for study had almost arrived.

"And so, my dear Don Renato," said Garantini, taking him affectionately by the hand, "we have got you back at last. After a pretty long absence—and such a long silence."

"You have some reason to complain, and you might well have forgotten me," replied Renato. "But you see, Garantini, I took my *rôle* of convalescent seriously, and once my friend Antonio left me in Paris, I changed my quarters, I may say, every day."

"You did well, by Jove!" exclaimed the lawyer. "Leaving home and shutting one's self up in an inn to write letters isn't travelling; it is carrying the *atra cura* of Horace about with you, and under the very worst form, a portable ink-bottle. People who are all right have no need to travel; those who do go require to forget themselves a little."

"Provided you don't forget your duty," added Renato. "And I will not forget that I owe you a debt of kindness, as you very well know. There has been an appeal, I imagine?"

"Here we are," said Garantini to himself. "Beginning with the court."

Then he continued aloud—

"We have appealed, of course. I am not the phœnix of lawyers, but these things I do remember; and though, to speak plainly, my client is the most 'contrary' man in the world——"

"Ah, indeed?" interrupted Renato. "And why do you say so?"

"Well, because, you see, I don't even know where he lives, this very peculiar client, and when I want him I have to post a sentry at the gate to wait till it happens to suit him to go through; because he wouldn't hear of an appeal, and I had almost to get into a rage to get leave from him to go on with the case; because, in short, every time we have met, we have been on the verge of quarrelling—now about the costs, which he was determined to pay beforehand; then about some point of honour or other, which he really carries to extremes. Indeed, if I weren't in company with two members of the aristocracy, I should say that all these old families are mad."

"Poor old gentleman!" exclaimed Renato. "He must have troubles enough to turn his head. Losing the lawsuit to begin with——"

"Oh, he didn't take that so much to heart. And then, just now, there's rejoicing in the family."

"Really? What about?" Renato asked, whose heart began to beat violently, though he made an effort to smile, not wishing to betray any emotion.

"His daughter is going to be married," replied Garantini, promptly. Whereupon he drew a long breath, for that secret really weighed on his mind, and he had been afraid that the opportunity of getting rid of it would not come so soon.

"Ah!" said Renato, and a deadly paleness overspread his face. "I hope she may be happy, she's a nice girl. Carluccio," he added, turning to a servant who was passing with a tray of glasses, "something to drink."

"Wine, or liqueur, Signor?"

"Liqueur, of course! What else, at this time of day?"

Antonio glanced at his friend and was silent. Garantini had no more to say, and waited in expectation.

"Besides," continued Renato, after swallowing a glass of cognac as if it had been so much water, "I am thinking of marrying, too."

"Oh, really! And who is the lady? You tell us this piece of news so abruptly—without preparing us to hear it with proper composure."

"Good God! What other way can I tell it? I tell it to you as I heard it. My father spoke to me yesterday about this business, this bargain, or whatever you please to call it. I haven't said yes yet, as I wanted some time to consider about it. You know these things can't be settled then and there. To be bound for life to a woman—that delightful and evil creature——"

"Ah, is that the way you treat the Divina Commedia?" cried Antonio, who hardly knew whether to laugh or to be angry.

Renato suppressed a sigh, and shook his head, as if he would fain drive away some painful thought.

"Yes, you are right, Antonio," he said then; "my quotation was *mal-à-propos*. Let us say then 'de-

lightful and kind.' But the fact remains that these matters require careful consideration. However, as this is the second day now, and I have reflected sufficiently, I will say the fatal 'yes,' which ought to delight my parents."

"And may we know—" said Garantini, hesitatingly; "you don't mind our inquiring——"

"Who the bride is? Nothing can be more reasonable. But to-day I can't give you a proper answer, because I haven't made her acquaintance myself yet. I know merely that she is worth half a dozen millions; of foreign birth; not noble, but, people say, beautiful; in quest of a ducal coronet in Naples; in expectation of a principality somewhere else—the period doubtful, I should imagine."

This tone made Garantini feel anxious. Everybody knows that at the mention of a wedding lawyers and attorneys prick up their ears. A marriage is a legal business, whether under the form of marriage settlements, divorce, or separation. But in this case Garantini had special reasons for attention, and not because there was a prospect of a grand match. His clever eyes showed this plainly enough; they looked as if they were piercing the Duke of Melito through and through, not to hurt him, God knows, but to see what was really in his mind.

The Duke of Melito, as an honoured guest, could not stay chattering in a corner, and very soon he had to take his share in the general conversation.

Garantini took this opportunity of saying good-bye, after a glance at the clock, the proper thing for all busy men.

"I shall come to see you to-morrow," said Renato. "You know I am in your debt."

"In mine?"

"Yes, for the lawsuit. There must have been some other expenses, I imagine."

"There were some, certainly; but they are paid. My dear Don Renato, the old gentleman became suspicious, and this very spring" (with this sort of euphemism Garantini meant to signify the catastrophe which had put an end to Renato's courtship), "he declared that he would bear the expenses himself. See, only the other day he brought me two thousand lire; and for all I could do, I had to take them."

"Two thousand lire! He must be rich then!"

"He must have sold his last bit of land," suggested Carafa.

"Perhaps it is his future son-in-law's money," remarked Renato, sarcastically.

"Who knows?" exclaimed Garantini. "It is quite possible."

"I shall see you to-morrow, then," continued Renato, as the merry party called him for another game of billiards.

Carafa followed Garantini into the ante-room.

"You see," said the latter, by way of conclusion, "our friend is recovering."

"Who knows?" retorted Carafa; "he seems to me too excited."

"Ah! a little annoyed; never mind."

"By the way," replied Antonio, "did you observe how he, usually so reserved, spoke so openly, and I may add, unbecomingly, of this marriage of his own,

springing up like a mushroom. To-morrow you should take him properly to task."

"Strange coincidence!" exclaimed Garantini, who could not get over this matrimonial plan.

"What coincidence?"

"That I must have met this rich stranger. One doesn't meet with a fortune counted by millions at every turn. A lady of this description came to me, accompanied by her father, to ask me certain questions——"

"About Renato?"

"Ah! the unruly member," said Garantini, recovering himself. "Unintentionally I was betraying the secrets of my profession."

"Excuse me, for having asked——" began Antonio.

"What, what! I was the babbler myself."

"Tell me, instead," continued Antonio, to change the subject, "do you think that this case, on which Renato was determined with so much magnanimity, may go against his family in the appeal?"

"My dear fellow, I can say neither 'yes' nor 'no.' We have a good case, and we shall make the best of it. You must remember that the whole case turns on the missing will, and the sentence went against us because we could bring no other proof of its existence than a simple entry in the notary's book. Well, this time we have asked to be allowed to prove the fact of the robbery of the will, and the court must grant us this."

"And why would the court not allow it before?"

"Because we couldn't ask it. Turchiarulo's family had disappeared at once."

"And now?"

"Now—it is another thing altogether. As to allowing this evidence, we have a decision of the Court of Cassation, establishing the principle that when there is written proof that a will has been in existence, and the said will is believed to have been made away with, the plaintiff has a right to prove that it has been made away with."

"This sentence looks as if it had been made exactly to suit you," remarked Antonio. "And when you have proved that the will has been made away with——"

"The essential part is still missing, I admit," proceeded Garantini. "But, you see, this state of things might be very embarrassing to our opponents; for, the disappearance of the deed once proved, what will the court have to do? Suspend the sentence, and hand over the case to His Majesty's Procurator General. From the civil to the criminal court. This ought to confound our enemies, I think."

"I see," said Antonio; "I see that there are rocks ahead, and that Renato may have reason to regret that he had anything to say to it."

"It's his own doing," replied Garantini, shrugging his shoulders. "However, my dear friend, my own conviction is, that the Caivano family is innocent, and before coming to extremities, we shall be able to lay our hands on the real criminals, or their present representatives."

"Ah, that would be a triumph indeed!" exclaimed Antonio. "I don't know how it may be; I am fond of Renato, and, therefore, of his family; but I can

sympathise greatly with that old man and his beautiful daughter. Do you know, Garantini, if Renato changes his mind and sacrifices himself to the millions, upon my word, as a gentleman, I will have nothing more to say to him."

"That would be too severe," remarked Garantini; "especially when the girl had set him the example."

"As you please," replied Antonio; "but I can't imagine Renato different from what he has always been. Besides, has not he, too, given us a specimen of what we may expect from him? Let him be true to himself if he cares to retain the esteem and friendship of one who has known and admired him hitherto."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HEIRESS.

THAT year, 1869, as we have already said, the ball-going season began earlier than usual at Naples. The winter had scarcely begun when the *élite* of the society of Naples were invited to a splendid *fête* in the palazzo formerly Dei Ravaschieri on the Lido Mergellina.

For many years the palazzo had belonged to a foreigner, Mr. Edward Mapleson, of the house of Mapleson Brothers, Liverpool bankers, who some time ago had extended their commercial activity to Italy.

After living there so many years, no Englishman was less English, nor any Neapolitan more Neapolitan, than Mr. Edward Mapleson, who, with that curious adaptability, a real gift in some foreigners, had adopted Neapolitan manners and customs till they were more like second nature to him. He could speak the Neapolitan dialect like a sailor of the Basso Porto, or a fisherman of the Pietra del Pesce, both words and gestures correct. He had come

as a young man to open a branch of Mapleson Brothers; and this, after thirty years' work of every description, from stock-jobbing to retailing dried fruits for America, had become a parent establishment in its turn. At Naples Mr. Edward Mapleson had also married an Englishwoman, as a matter of course. The sons of Albion can change in everything, even to the colour of their hair; but their wives must be of English growth, because Englishmen must have their home wherever they go, and this home, a genuine bit of the United Kingdom, in the remotest corner of the globe where an Englishman has penetrated, is undoubtedly the best that there is. The curious thing was that this gentleman, in the streets, in the cafés, with Gennari and Raffae, spoke the tongue of Pulcinella, that gay and racy speech, while at home he shut his teeth, and hissed out his words like serried battalions on the parade ground, with his wife Jane, and with a goodly progeny of Johns, Williams, Victorias, and Alices.

Mr. Mapleson's house was a palace, as I have already said, with all the internal luxury of a city palace, and all the delightful surroundings of a country one. Towards the front there was a lovely garden, at the other side of a short, wide avenue, and, hidden from the eyes of the visitors, stood the stables and other back premises. A double flight of steps, made as if on purpose for a fountain, over which presided Neptune with his trident, led to the entrance of the palace, which in this way was well raised from the ground and freed from any danger of damp.

But we must return to Mr. Mapleson's ball. The

servants in livery, and some belonging to the house, some hired for the solemn occasion, were distributed about the halls, the vestibules, the courtyard, or wherever their presence was required by the guests, who were now flocking into Villa Mapleson. The ladies, few in number at first, as it is a rule of etiquette to make the want of themselves felt, were beginning to alight in greater numbers from coroneted carriages, and were received in the vestibule by Mr. and Mrs. Mapleson, a good-looking lady, now near forty, dressed as every mistress of a house should be, with the greatest simplicity.

It was eleven o'clock exactly when a carriage well known to Mr. Mapleson drew up at the entrance-door. Mr. Mapleson made a few steps towards it.

"Jane," he said to his wife with the expression of a man who would fain sing "Nunc dimittis," "here are the Temples."

The word must have had something of a magic sound; for caught up by two or three young gentlemen standing about the hall, it was repeated from group to group with marvellous rapidity, followed by a murmur of conversation from the groups of gentlemen, and even making many ladies turn with inquiring eyes towards the entrance-door.

Fit and proper curiosity. It was the arrival, the arrival at last of the great attraction of the evening, the queen of beauty, in short, the lady in whose honour the Maplesons were giving their *fête*.

The Temple party consisted of three persons; but she who excited all this attention was a girl called Sarah.

This girl for the last four or five weeks had been turning the heads of the most romantic and susceptible youths in the peninsula, attracting the attention of their elders, and, as a natural result, the curiosity of the ladies. For the last month the Corso di Chiaia had been more frequented than usual; for a month the groups were larger than ever at the entrance to the Villa Nazionale, where, at a regular hour every afternoon, the beautiful English girl passed in an open carriage.

Sarah Temple was uncommonly pretty. A philosopher (for there are philosophers still in our days, and especially of the peripatetic school) might have asked himself when he saw her in what respect she differed from others, to justify this proclamation of the eighth wonder of the world. They could not tell, but still the fact remained that Sarah Temple, a girl under twenty, with no history, and no legend that could take the place of a history without having talked to any one, or slain any one with her bright eyes, perhaps for these very reasons, acquired such importance in the fashionable world of Naples, and made the reigning belles shake on their thrones of velvet.

For example, they would never have dared to alight after four or five turns in the Corso, at the Café della Villa, and draw after them into the kiosk the *élite* of Neapolitan society. Before her time, the custom had been to eat ices without leaving their carriages at the Café del Palazzo Reale, in the Piazza del Plebiscito. The English beauty introduced the new custom with a *coup d'état*, quite unconscious of all its importance. Miss Temple left her carriage, and the others followed

her. She had accomplished a revolution quietly, and perhaps the credit is due to her that it was not a bloody one, for many of the gentlemen in her suite would not have hesitated a moment to turn the villa into a *champ clos*, there to contend for the honour of a smile, if she had given it to be understood that her smile was to be the prize. In fact, not even in the days of Nelson and Lady Hamilton had English people been so much the rage on the banks of the Sebeto.

One thing was annoying, that this gracious apparition would not take a more permanent dwelling in Naples and would remain in the hotel. The Temple family occupied two floors in the Palazzo del Chiatamone, formerly the residence of a Bourbon prince, but now turned into a hotel, the "George Washington," the resort of both Americans and English. And perhaps it was this very name which had influenced the choice of the Temples; perhaps it was the attraction of the garden, on which the ground floor opened, with a view of the sea right before them. However it may be, they were comfortable there, and to all appearances they had no idea of leaving it for a more permanent dwelling-place.

Were they really English? With her dark complexion tinged with pink, her black hair and deep blue eyes, Sarah Temple was as little like a Briton as any one could be. Neither did she seem to be an Englishwoman from North America, for there the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxons are equally lasting. She was surely born in India, and her complexion must have been bronzed by that same burning sun

of the land of Lakmi and Sacontala, the perfection of Oriental beauty, divine and human. And you may be certain these comparisons, taken from Sanscrit writings, must have been in the minds of the most gallant of the Neapolitan reporters the day following the *fête* at Casa Mapleson, a ball which, as I have already said, opened the winter season of that year with much *éclat*.

The belle that evening was looking indescribably lovely. Not very tall, but exquisitely made, and simply dressed in rose-coloured gauze, most becoming to her dark complexion. She wore neither diamonds nor pearls, out of place on a young girl; though, if she had chosen to wear them, no one could have ventured to criticise. Her sole ornament, irresistible from the effect of the contrast, was a rose, artistically arranged in her hair, so artistically that it looked as if roses should grow nowhere else.

We have not yet introduced the young lady's father, and this certainly is rather a breach of manners. But, after all, my offence is not so great as it might appear at first sight. The worthy gentleman's part in my story is in proportion to his importance in his own house and among his neighbours. In fact, he was an appendage to his daughter. There are many fathers of this description, and a certain number of mothers, too.

Mr. Temple had given life to business, and he had done wisely, much more wisely than if he had spent it wandering about the world with a countenance neither good nor bad-looking, neither intelligent nor foolish—one of those faces like a hundred others

in every city in the world. Without a doubt, Miss Temple must have been more like her mother, unusual though that may be; and her mother, on her part, could not have been very like her sister; for her Aunt Jessica, the faithful chaperon of this lovely creature, this splendid brunette, was a blonde of the purest type, with vivid crimson in her cheeks, and not a few freckles.

Miss Temple's father was still young from a business point of view. But, before setting out and giving up his business for the present, he had said (and Mapleson, his correspondent liked repeating it), that on drawing up the marriage settlements of his beloved daughter, a fortune of one million would be forthcoming in ready money, while five more would be accounted for which she could dispose of as she liked. For his part, the poor man contented himself with some property on credit, which he had in New York, amounting to about another million, and that, in his hands, would be the foundation of another fortune.

A curious father! One could hardly help thinking that he was a genuine American, so great was the Olympic serenity with which he talked about millions, the sublime indifference with which he was heaping one portion after another on his daughter, and the coolness with which he proposed setting about making other millions.

But enough of description! Let us go back to our belle with her six millions. There she was in her gauzy robe, with the rose in her hair, lovely as Sulamite, surrounded by a host of admirers, who had lost no time in being introduced to her, to beg

for the favour of a waltz, a mazurka, or a quadrille, and to wonder to themselves why she was not covered from head to foot with pearls and precious stones.

This thought, by a natural association of ideas, occurred to the minds of the men. But the older ladies came to the conclusion that Miss Temple had judged rightly in appearing in such simple array. And certain other choicer spirits, observing the turquoises in her eyes and the coral on her lips, and all the sparkle of her fresh young loveliness, admitted unhesitatingly that pearls and precious stones would perhaps have spoilt her.

These thoughts, however, hardly presented themselves to the mind of the Prince of Caivano, who, in one of the side rooms, was busy pondering over all the delightful details communicated to him by his host.

"Yes, Prince," the banker was saying, "matters stand exactly as I have had the honour of telling you. I like Naples because I came here in my youth and served a hard apprenticeship in it. At this time of day I am a banker and—a poet."

"Quite right," remarked Don Federigo, amiably; "sentiment, too, must have its share. And you are right in wishing that this fortune, on its way through Naples, should remain in Naples, especially if it is so considerable as you represent it."

"As to that you may be as certain as if the ledgers of the Temple house of business were in my hands," replied the banker. "My information is precise. Indeed, of two millions, I may say, I have personal knowledge. They passed through my hands, and

are now invested in Italian securities. Every one trusts these Italian securities, I must say."

Don Federigo showed no wish to protest against the banker's assertions. He was anxious to hear the remainder of the financial statement.

"The other millions, too, are well invested," proceeded Mr. Mapleson. "Two in the Bank of England, one with the Rothschilds in Paris, another still in America."

"In land?" inquired the Prince of Caivano.

"No; what is invested in land doesn't count for anything. The old gentleman keeps the plantations in his own hands, as he wishes to go back there. The million I speak of is in the Suffolk Bank, one of the best in America. I, for my part, would fain see it in Italy, where it and its fellow brought from Paris might be well invested. But, you see, my dear Prince, if these millions are to be got here, their legitimate owner must take up her abode here too."

"Quite right. And have you settled on any one?" inquired Don Federigo.

"Not yet—that is," replied the banker, with studied reticence, "I have thought of several who combine the three qualities necessary—a good name, a good fortune, and a prepossessing appearance. Because, as it is important to please a young lady, good looks are a *sine qua non*, I may add, of the greatest importance."

"Of course," remarked the prince approvingly. "Now let me hear the result of this review."

"Well," replied the banker, "I shall begin with the least important—Baron Mainardi?"

"Rich enough," remarked Don Federigo, "but his family is not very old."

"That is just what I thought myself. Sambiase?"

"A good name; but he hasn't property enough to match her fortune."

"That's true. The Duke of Lernica?"

"Excellent family; but the same objection applies to him."

"Then he is out of the question. The Prince of Sarriano?"

"Empty handed. I can't advise him."

"Don Antonio Carafa, of the Venosa family."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Don Federigo, who was a gentleman and incapable of telling a lie. "Antonio Carafa is one of the best of men. A good name, good-looking, a perfect gentleman, like all those who went before him. A bit of a liberal, but I must say what I think, though it may be against my own predilections."

"This confession does you credit, Prince," replied Mapleson with a bow. "Besides I left Carafa to the last, for I, too, have my predilections."

"You couldn't have any one better," remarked Don Federigo.

"Eh, why not? For instance, a certain Duke of Melito."

It would be idle to deny that the Prince of Caivano felt gratified by this suggestion; but he took care not to betray this to his companion.

"Hum! not bad," he muttered.

And as the simplest way he burst out laughing.

"Really," he added, as he held out his hand to the

banker, "it would be unbecoming in me to sing the praises of the Duke of Melito; but neither can I depreciate him."

"And you would be wrong, Prince, even if you were to do so. Young, handsome, rich, of distinguished manners, with a title——"

"That will do, that will do, my dear friend!" cried the prince. "You will spoil all with your admiration, even to his father."

"I have done," said Mr. Mapleson, "and I have said all I had to say. Let us come to the point; what do you think of my plan?"

"But—what can I say? Is this a definite proposal of yours?"

"Of course! You remember, Don Federigo, that I said something of this once before, though a little vaguely. And then you seemed to me to be considering——"

"And why not?" interrupted the prince. "You are a man of the world, Mr. Mapleson, and you can understand those feelings of dignity and delicacy which were troubling me. To run blindfold into an affair which might not turn out according to our wishes does not seem desirable either for you or me."

"That's true; but here the proposal comes from me; you have nothing to do with it; but first tell me if, supposing there were a chance of it, you would approve. The others have their dignity to consider also, and you are too gentleman-like to allow me to let the Temples run the risk of a refusal."

"Certainly," replied Don Federigo, without hesitation.

"This is between ourselves then," continued the banker, drawing closer; "no one is to know anything. And, you see, we must let the young people do their part. It is their concern; our part is to bring them together. We shall be on the look-out, and when the time comes, interpose. With the old father I shall do what is necessary, and with all the delicacy possible, to spare the feelings of both parties. Come now, my dear Don Federigo, let me present you to the ladies."

They had left the room as they were talking, and were now coming into the ball-room.

"You will introduce me to the old lady," said the prince, with a laugh; "the younger one, it seems to me, is already engaged with a gentleman of our acquaintance."

"Did I not say that the young people should be left to do their part?" replied Mr. Mapleson, in the same tone. "And one would think they had heard us, for they have begun already without any prompting."

In fact, while the two negotiators were on their way to the ball-room, Mrs. Mapleson had introduced the Duke of Melito to Miss Temple; and the young gentleman, after some polite speeches to her aunt, had asked the young lady for the first dance, for which she was yet unengaged. Just at that moment the two negotiators appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BALL.

I HAVE now a case of conscience to submit to the judgment of my readers. *Utrum possit.* But no, let Padre Sanchez, of worthy memory, keep his formulary to himself, especially as this is not one of those special cases where Latin is *de rigueur*. Can a girl promise a dance to Tizio when she is already engaged to Caius?

At first sight, the question seems an idle one. Evidently, if she is engaged, the girl cannot, as a promise is a kind of contract; but here, probably, there are cases and cases. A theologian would make a distinction; a philosopher would make a distinction; let us do the same. Suppose that Caius has no objection; this solves the difficulty. Suppose there is no such person as Caius, or that perhaps he is some thousand kilometres off, and the difficulty is at an end, or does not signify.

Let me give an instance. A beautiful girl, and

particularly one going to a *fête* given specially in her honour, may suppose without vanity that her card will soon be full of names, engaging her for all the dances from beginning to end. Granting this, what can a sensible girl do; to leave, let us say, some time for resting; or room for a special friend, too late to go through the usual form? A blank cannot easily be left in the card, while so many cavaliers are besieging her like butterflies, aphides, and hornets, round an unfortunate rose; especially as the cavaliers can see the blank spaces while they are writing their own names.

Such being the case, what does a clever girl do who would like a little time to rest, or a dance reserved for some special purpose? She writes down some name or other, let us say Caius. Tizio will come first, Sempronius may come afterwards. Caius has his place secured to him in the middle. Caius is the expected one; the place kept for the best dancer, or the half-hour's rest, over and above what the orchestra allows.

Ladies, you mustn't think me unamiable for disclosing your secret in this way. You see, sometimes circumstances are too strong for us; and in this case it was the necessities of my tale that were too strong for me. Besides, I hasten to add, that the thing always seemed to me most natural, and, but for the fear of becoming tedious, I could even prove its desirableness by a reasoning under three heads. I shall confine myself to saying that I believe it to be so; and others may disagree with me if they like.

Sarah Temple, for hers was the case in point, had

her little mother-of-pearl book all scribbled over with names before she had been half an hour in the Mapleson's ball-room. The Calabrese, at all times lovers of roses, had swarmed round this rare species.

A young lady cannot say "No" to this shower of invitations, nor reply, "My partner came with me," as country girls do at rural balls. On the other hand, these girls have other annoyances, which fashionable young ladies escape in their more ceremonious gatherings. True it is, that every rose has its thorn.

Then, let us say, the young lady glances at her tablets, sees the dance free, and gives it to her friend. One more name in the little ivory book, and this entry is as binding on both parties as if it were a deed drawn up on parchment by a regular notary in presence of "under-signed witnesses."

You may imagine then what chance the Duke of Melito had of getting a dance from Miss Temple; he who had made no effort to be among the first, nor even the second.

"Duke," Mrs. Mapleson said to him, as she was busily discharging her duties as hostess, "may I present you to Mrs. and Miss Temple?"

"Thank you, Signora," he replied, with a bow; "you are very kind."

So the introduction took place; and Renato, after the few conventional words to her aunt, had said everything that was proper to a girl on such a momentous occasion.

"Signorina, may I hope for the pleasure——"

My readers may supply the rest; for the speech remained unfinished.

Renato, to tell the truth, had no hopes in the matter; or rather, he knew that he was certain to be late. And I may also add, that he did not particularly regret it. He had followed that feeling of vanity which, combined with the desire of imitation, rules our daily life. Towards Miss Temple, and in general towards all the girls in both hemispheres, he felt great indifference and unconcern; therefore he paid little heed to certain speeches of his father's, and to the ideas which, in consequence of these speeches, had passed through his own head when he was out of sorts.

While he was waiting, without any special eagerness, for a reply, the young lady of the six millions had given a rapid glance at her tablets.

"I am disengaged for one dance, and a long one," she said, with an expression of real regret; "a quadrille."

"I am lucky, then," replied Renato, courteously. "Perhaps I may ask if you are still disengaged for the cotillon."

"I am, indeed, as I thought my father and aunt would rather not stay so late."

Here was an opportunity for overwhelming her with a compliment of this kind: "Signorina, could they be so cruel as to rob the *fête* of its brightest ornament?" or this other, nicer still: "How dull the *fête* will be after you are gone!" But Renato dealt in no rubbish of this kind; nor did he think of assuming that expression of speechless concern which some strategists commend.

Instead, he replied quietly—

"Perhaps you will allow me, in case you are still here."

The girl assented with a little bow, and gave up her mother-of-pearl book to Renato, who wrote opposite the cotillon, simply "Duke of Melito."

Consequently, it occurred to him to inscribe his name for the quadrille, which came first, though, in so doing, he was taking the place of an Asdrubale Tornaquinci.

My readers, of course, are ignorant of who Asdrubale Tornaquinci was, and will be curious to know. A curiosity perfectly natural, which happily I can satisfy. Asdrubale Tornaquinci was a most finished gentleman of my time, who did an almost daily service to the dearest and wildest of the author's friends.

If it came into my friend's head to knock at the door of a house where he never had been—such a trifle could not stop him.

"Excuse me," he would say, in his most courteous voice; "does Signor Asdrubale Tornaquinci live here?"

"No, sir."

"A thousand pardons; perhaps it is on the next storey?"

The reply to this was another "No," accompanied by a smile, which certainly was not Asdrubale's.

And now that my readers have made this gentleman's valuable acquaintance, I shall add that Miss Temple's Asdrubale Tornaquinci was a gentleman inhabiting a distant land, who that evening might

perhaps have felt his ears tingling without knowing why. About which we need not concern ourselves, because, only too often, that worthy, but by no means remarkable, inhabitant of a city that shall be nameless, knew little about what was going on.

The time for the quadrille having come, the Duke of Melito, who had retired discreetly from Miss Temple's neighbourhood, returned to take Asdrubale's place. The girl rose, settled the folds of her dress after the fashion of every daughter of Eve, and took the young gentleman's arm.

"Look at that perfect villain," observed some friends of Renato's, seeing him advance into the middle of the room with his prey on his arm. "He has lost no time."

That I should report all the conversation of two young people during the intervals of a quadrille cannot be expected. They talked about one thing and another—about England, Miss Temple's native land; and of Naples, the Duke of Melito's; of Naples especially, which Miss Temple much admired, and where she would gladly take up her abode.

Under this delicate web there were many fine threads denoting two things—the cleverness of the speakers, and their wish, mutually, to make a favourable impression. I know there is nothing new in this, for a similar wish is felt by any two people who see each other for the first time; but I wish to show thereby that their conversation amounted to no more than this, neither ardour on his part nor coquetry on hers.

Renato remembered very well a certain conversa-

tion with his father, and seeing vaguely a possible wife in this fair daughter of Albion, he tried to drive the idea out of his head. In the meantime, he liked doing homage to the lady's charms, to which he was quite alive, and he had no objection to appear a perfect gentleman in her eyes, always a consideration, even in dealing with people of no importance.

Miss Temple, on her part, though it was not exactly for him that she had kept the place on her tablets where Asdrubale Tornaquinci figured, was, at the same time, well pleased to give it to a man like him. But she was not in love, nor was she disposed to fall in love later on, though she had a burning desire to make his acquaintance.

The quadrille over, the duke brought Miss Temple back to her aunt, and after a few minutes' talk with the ladies, just as much as courtesy required, he made way for his successor.

"Who is that lady?" Baron Sambiase inquired, stopping him as they met.

"A very pleasant young lady," replied Renato, indifferently. And he proceeded towards the card-room, the refuge of the elders who do not dance, and even of the young ones when their dance is over.

"Melito is reserved," observed the Prince of Nicastro.

"But his father betrays him," added Baron Sambiase, who was with him; "just look where he has perched himself."

"Aha!" exclaimed the Prince of Nicastro, turning his eyes in the direction pointed out by Sambiase. "Is it no longer true that sons succeed their fathers?

Here the fathers succeed their sons. I must submit this knotty point to Garantini; he may cut it with some legal aphorism."

The Prince of Caivano had indeed, soon after his son had left Miss Temple and her aunt, come up to them in company with Mr. Mapleson, and the latter gentleman had introduced them.

Don Federigo was a perfect gentleman, and mingled a little of the elaborate politeness of the old school with the rather brusque manners of the present day. So his introduction was rather a solemn performance, like a presentation at court, or like what one sees in the theatre when some great star is on the stage.

"I shall be very happy," the prince had remarked, "to introduce to you, ladies, my son, the Duke of Melito."

"We have already the pleasure of knowing him," said Miss Temple's aunt, displaying as she smiled her serried ranks of teeth.

"He is to be my partner in the cotillon," added the young lady, blushing slightly.

"Excellent," thought Don Federigo. "The cotillon too!"

He had seen the quadrille also, though he feigned ignorance. But his imagination, however lively, could not have dreamt of such good luck as the cotillon. At this juncture, his son seemed to him a perfect genius, a prodigy, a Machiavelli in the art of making love.

Miss Temple's father, the maker of all those dazzling though unseen millions, cared little for balls

and late hours. He would gladly have gone to snatch a few minutes' sleep in some corner of the villa, but the poor man always found somebody at his elbow, trying to amuse him. If they had even sung his daughter's praises he could have borne it, it was the only subject that interested him; but these clever people never found it out. They beat about the bush, afraid of betraying themselves, and with all their diplomacy only annoyed him, and made him wish them far enough away every minute in the hour.

Now and then, to get rid of some more than usually obnoxious bore, he came into the ball-room, took a look at Sarah dancing away, and exchanged a few words with Mrs. Temple.

"My dear," the lady would say, "have patience; we must stay for the cotillon."

"A long time!" he replied, with a sigh.

"We can't help it; she is so fond of dancing."

"In that case I shall say nothing; I shall come again later."

And after a few words with Mapleson if he happened to meet him, the good old man took himself off to prowl about the garden.

Towards morning, when it was no longer necessary for the host to dance attendance on his guests, who were all busy with the longest and gayest cotillon imaginable, Mr. Mapleson also made his way to the garden, to have a little conversation with Mr. Temple.

"The young lady," he said, "has had a great success."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the other, with eyes glittering with satisfaction. "You see, Mr. Mapleson,

my daughter is really a wonderful girl. You may judge of her by what she has made of me."

"And of your friend here present," added the banker.

"Oh, as for you, that is nothing. You at any rate remain—Mapleson."

"That's true," observed his friend, laughing; "and, moreover, I hope always to remain so, and now more than ever, the family banker."

"Quite true; I shall be the loser in this game."

"And why? Can't you stay. Perhaps you don't like Italy?"

"I do, certainly, and particularly this bit of paradise called Naples. But, you see, man is a sort of plant, and has his vegetable side, especially at my age. I have read somewhere that all plants are distributed geographically, and that every species has its own particular home. They live in foreign lands too; some in stove-houses, because they require a certain amount of heat; others in the shade, because they have no love for the sun. But all of them, without exception, change a little; some dwindle, some get wrinkled, none of them remain what they were."

"It is Mrs. Mapleson's garden that gives you these botanical notions, my dear Mr. Temple. However, the young lady, though she is a rare plant, will not be of the same opinion."

"Perhaps so. Perhaps the younger plants are more easily acclimatised than old ones. But I am not certain of it yet, and till I have seen this miracle with my own eyes——"

"You may see it here," interrupted the banker; "I too was an exotic and yet I have become accustomed to a new clime; what's more, I like it better than my native land."

"Yes, I see; but you are English—a real Englishman: you belong to that tribe of wandering Jews who can live anywhere provided they have their tea, their biscuits, their roast beef, their soap, and in due time, a wife according to the national pattern."

"Mr. Temple, see, some one is coming," said the banker; "be a little more English, pray."

"You are right, my dear friend. Sometimes I forget my native land. Rule, Britannia! God save the Queen! All right! Do you wish for any more?"

"No, for pity's sake! You would soon come to—invocations; that is, that part of every foreign idiom which Lord Byron used to learn first."

In the meantime, as the banker had given warning, they heard footsteps; some wandering guests who had come out to breathe the fresh air even at the risk of catching cold. This necessitated a change of conversation, rather to Mr. Temple's annoyance, who, taking all in all, would fain at that hour have been in his comfortable bed. "How prosy!" the young people say. But even young people must sleep, and "a good bed at proper hours," said Mr. Temple, "is equal to a good breakfast, a good cigar, and, in short, all the the best things in the world." A reflection this, not particularly profound, but, on the other hand, true enough.

His bed-time came at last. That cotillon—which

Miss Temple danced from beginning to end, besieged as she was by a host of partners, courteous, but bitter rivals of the Duke of Melito, came to an end somehow at seven in the morning. The most zealous dancers demanded another galop, and the obliging orchestra struck up the famous "Bianchi e Neri" of Rota's, that great dancer who at this hour (not a late one for him) used, with half a dozen of his friends, to gather round a bottle of Certosini. "Friends, let us concentrate," used to be poor Rota's summons. Alas! the great artist concentrated in earnest, and sleeps a long sleep after all his wakeful nights.

At last, however, even the galop came to an end. The dawn with her saffron-coloured fingers had begun to tinge the edge of the horizon with a yellowish light towards Sorrento and Amalfi, to be followed by rose-colour, then by blue, and so on through all her lovely varieties of colour. It was at last time to go. Many mothers were dropping asleep, and the daughters of some mothers were sleepy too. You know there are juvenile mothers and daughters that are not juvenile. Pretty women may have been once young; plain ones never could have looked young. Freaks of nature—nature who divides her favours so unequally. Jean Jacques esteemed her highly, but without knowing her thoroughly.

Mr. Temple, to come back to him, saw some prospect of a rest which he had well earned. Miss Temple passed between two rows of gentlemen, all hat in hand, her victims of this evening.

Renato alone was absent. He had taken leave a little earlier than his fair partner and was standing

aside with Carafa waiting for his father, to wish him good morning as he got into his carriage. It was not far to Palazzo Caivano from Mergellina, and Renato preferred walking. Don Federigo drove off alone.

"So it is settled then?" said the prince to Renato, as he shook hands with him at the carriage door. "Let us have no childishness. Are you ready for the conquest of the Golden Fleece?"

"'Fiat voluntas tua,'" replied his son with a nod of assent.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FIELD DAY.

"AND now, what shall we do?" asked Antonio Carafa, putting his arm into Renato's. "Shall we really go to bed?"

"I don't know," replied Renato, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Where would you like to go?"

"'In primis et ante omnia,' since we have the place to ourselves, let us take a turn towards the Villa. You are not afraid of cold, are you?"

"There is no cold to speak of," said Renato. "It is more like a morning in autumn, it is so mild; and the sun will soon warm it. There it comes, indeed, with its golden rays.

> 'What a dawn is this! not amidst blood-red clouds
> Does the sun this day rise. . . .'

This is a morning that would have contented King Saul, a good beginning for a day of battle."

"Which he was to lose," remarked Renato.

"Ah! that's true," replied Carafa. "Of Gilboa, these are the mountains. But here there are no Philistines that I can see. Moreover, to destroy the ill-omen, here are a couple of lines:

> 'The morning came; and the burning sands of Engedi
> Were tinged with rosy light by the sun.'

The sands we have here quite close on the beach at Mergellina, and if you wish to say your morning prayer, like Count Mamiani's Emir, everything is in keeping; your face is worthy of Abd-el-Kader this minute."

Renato replied to this sally with a melancholy smile, like what the French call so appropriately a smile *au bout des lèvres*, which betrayed instead of concealing his anguish of mind. Our hero was by no means pleased with himself, and the workings of his conscience gave him that gloomy expression which had struck Carafa, and suggested the comparison with Abd-el-Kader.

What was his conscience saying? That anger is a bad counsellor, and that because he had been banished from Margherita's house, this gave him no right to fall in love with some one else. But had she not disappeared for ever? In consequence of her old father's wrath, had Renato not lost all trace of his beloved? She herself, if she still retained a particle of affection for him, must have known very well that Renato could not come back of himself, to this new home so hastily chosen by her father. Why had she

not tried to let him know? Why had six months been allowed to pass without his being able to discover any glimmer of light to help him? He had been away certainly, but he had been ill too, extremely ill, and for her sake. And then, had she not consoled herself already? Had not that dreadful Signor Ruggero told Garantini that his daughter was going to marry some one else?

Yes, this was the real point of the agony. She was going to be married; she loved some one else.

The two friends, coasting along the Mergellina shore made their way into the Villa Nazionale, a fresh expanse of green, stretching between Chiaia and the shore. Carafa would fain have brought round the conversation to Margherita. But how was he to manage it. The allusion to Renato's gloomy countenance had remained unanswered, therefore he could not continue in this vein, and so turned to discussing the Temple *fête*. As he could not evoke the image of Margherita Altavilla, he dwelt on the graces of Sarah Temple.

"Yes, she is nice and pretty," said Renato; "and she must be a clever girl to hold her own against all the fortune hunters, buzzing about her already."

"Ah, do you think so?" said Carafa, as if surprised at so much penetration.

"Yes, I think so," replied Renato, with Spartan brevity.

Antonio Carafa was off the scent. A few days before, Renato had alluded to a possible marriage with a rich foreigner, a marriage that would give great satisfaction to his father; and Antonio's

thoughts had immediately flown to Sarah Temple. The suspicion had become a certainty, when he remarked the attention shown to the girl by the Duke of Melito, and the solemn presentation of the Prince of Caivano to her family. Then after this speech of his friend's, Antonio did not know what to think.

As for Renato, I may say that he was talking at haphazard, still undecided between yes and no. His last words to his father were weighing on his mind, and he would have given anything rather than have allowed a consent of this kind to be surprised from him. No less heavily weighed on him a promise which he had made Miss Temple, to bring her that very day certain Neapolitan songs that were new to her. You see, kind readers, he had gone a little too far, for a first meeting. But what could he do? Between the quadrille and the cotillon the conversation had been so long, that he could hardly avoid some indiscretion. Therefore, indiscretion or not, he had made an engagement, and now, in cold blood, he felt how embarrassing it was.

Proceeding along the Via del Chiatamone, Antonio remarked with increasing wonder, that Renato passed the Washington Hotel without raising his eyes, without a sigh, without a few melodious notes in a tenor voice, as any other in his place would certainly have done, in the delightful hope that they might penetrate to the ears of the lovely Englishwoman.

"The fact is, I don't understand anything about it," concluded Antonio to himself.

It was seven o'clock in the morning, when the two friends, proceeding silently on their way, reached the

corner of the Palazzo Reale. Where were they to go at such an hour? Carafa thought that at the Casino dell' Unione they might find some friend still at the ecarté table.

"Shall we go in for a minute?" he said to Renato. "We might have a cup of tea, and then go to bed."

"All right," replied Renato, who at that moment had no will of his own.

They proceeded along the side of the Teatro San Carlo, and mounted the steps of the Casino, which was still lit up. The rooms were open, and in them were still several gentlemen of the Court of Macbeth.

This was Carafa's name for them, because they, like the assassin of Duncan, though not for the same reason, had "murdered sleep."

A servant in the hall, taking the Duke of Melito's cloak said—

"Yesterday, two gentlemen were here asking for you, Eccellenza."

"For me?" asked Renato, "and who are they?"

"I do not know. They said they had been at your Palazzo, but without finding you. They then came here, and seemed anxious to find you."

"They might have left cards," remarked the Duke of Melito, as if speaking to himself.

"Probably," replied the servant, "they have left them at the Palazzo Caivano."

"True," concluded Renato. "And now bring us two cups of tea."

So saying the Duke of Melito went into the reading-room, and proceeded to throw himself into a soft arm-chair, where he remained with his head bent down in

a meditative attitude, whilst Antonio carefully studied the newspapers.

"Who could they be?" asked Antonio, after three or four minutes of this occupation, between a telegram in the "Times," and an article in the "Saturday Review."

"I do not know," replied Renato. "A challenge perhaps."

"A challenge!" exclaimed Antonio, raising his eyebrows. "What makes you suppose such a thing?"

"Did you not hear? There were two of them. What else can it be?"

"True, true," said Antonio, with a shake of his head. "But who could you have quarrelled with yesterday?"

"I have a feeling that the challenge comes from there."

"From there? Where?"

"From her."

"Excuse me, Renato, I don't understand. How can she have anything to say to it if she is going to be married?"

"How can I tell? Might it not be from her intended? I really cannot tell how this idea came into my head; I don't understand how or why they can have anything to fight with me about, but I have a presentiment that they have something to do with this visit, and I must hurry home to find out their names."

"You are right; we might guess from the names, or try to guess, what they want."

"And, of course," added Renato, "in case it is a challenge, you will be my second."

"Of course," replied Antonio, "I am always at your service."

"Thanks! The greatest nuisance is, that it will keep you from your bed."

"Oh, that doesn't matter. If necessary I sha'n't go to bed at all. We lose plenty of nights! So then, let us proceed to your house, see the names of these wonderful gentlemen, and if there is any sign of battle, or if they have merely left a message to say that they will return during the morning, let us go to stretch our limbs in the gymnasium, and then have breakfast. With these occupations we can fill up any interval, don't you think so?"

"Capital. Let us go, then, and as we return we can knock up Sambiase or Gravina, if necessary. Which do you prefer as a comrade?"

"Either of them will do."

These preliminaries being arranged, and having made preparation for any eventuality, as a gentleman should, Renato and his friend left the Casino dell' Unione. They got into the first carriage they met in the Largo San Ferdinando, and drove to Chiaia. They were just about to alight at Palazzo Caivano when they perceived two young gentlemen dressed in black, an unusual thing at that hour, in gloves and tall hats, evidently intending to pay a visit.

"Holloa!" said Antonio. "This must be them. We needn't even look at their cards."

Antonio was right. These two gentlemen really were waiting for Renato. Accordingly, just as the

latter turned towards the door, the two gentlemen, who were walking at a little distance, came up, and the foremost, touching his hat, asked very courteously, but in an extremely grave tone—

"Excuse me, Eccellenza; the Duke of Melito——?"

"Here I am, at your service," replied Renato, promptly. And he stood still, while his looks expressed a desire to know the object of their visit.

"You will excuse us," said the other, "for coming to disturb you so early."

Renato's gesture expressed assent.

"But we have an important letter to deliver to you," continued the stranger.

"Be so good as to walk in," replied the Duke of Melito, with rather chilly politeness. "Pietro, go and let us in."

"Yes, Eccellenza," said the porter, to whom he had given the order, and who thereupon conducted the four gentlemen up the stairs to Renato's rooms.

As they came in, Antonio, in compliance with a sigh from his friend, retired discreetly into an adjoining room.

"Won't you sit down," said Renato, to the other two. "To what do I owe you the honour of this visit? Ah, you said you had a letter for me."

"Yes, Signor; here it is," replied the one whom, for the present, we may call the orator of the embassy.

Renato took the letter, and found it addressed to: "The Eccellentissimo Don Renato Altavilla, Duke of Melito;" and, with an inclination of his head, as if to ask leave of his visitors, he opened the envelope.

Let us give a glance at the letter which Renato hastened to open, and let us read with him.

"Signor Duca,—A dispute between my father and yours, arising from offence given by both sides, was arranged provisionally through the good offices of their seconds. Having arrived in Naples a short time ago, after a long absence, it was only yesterday that I read this document, in which I see it is stated that offence was given first, and principally by Don Federigo Altavilla. This gentleman also expresses his readiness to give account of his words and actions to Don Ruggero, at the conclusion of the lawsuit still pending between the two houses.

"This, in my opinion, is an open question, which we can and should close. If there be reasons which prevent a meeting between our fathers, there are none to prevent it between the sons. Signor Duca, are you willing? In this case, my seconds, the bearers of this message, will arrange with yours.

"Yours, Signor Duca, most respectfully,

"Corrado Altavilla,

"Duke of Melito."

This letter astonished Renato. "Where can he come from?" he said to himself.

He suddenly remembered the sailor whom he had seen a year ago in the harbour, clambering into the rigging of the brigantine. And the image of Margherita, too, flashed into his mind; Margherita, whom he had so loved; Margherita, now lost to him for ever.

All this flashed through his mind in the space of a few seconds, but there was no time for thinking. His visitors were present, and required an answer; and Corrado's demand left him no option as to what that answer must be.

"Antonio!" he shouted, turning towards the adjoining room.

Carafa did not keep him long waiting. He took in the state of affairs at a glance.

Renato gave him the letter which he had in his hand. Then, at once, he turned towards his visitors.

"Gentlemen," he said, with much courtesy; "I understand very little of this business, and perhaps I could make inquiries from my father the Prince of Caivano's seconds. But I may add, and this will simplify matters, that it is never my custom to discuss a challenge, nor to ask for any explanation, when it is brought to me by two gentlemen, this fact alone being quite sufficient. Don Antonio Carafa will make all arrangements for me, our views in this matter being identical."

Antonio nodded in confirmation of Renato's words.

"It is in your hands now," added Renato, lowering his voice a little. "Will you see Sambiase or Gravina?"

"Yes, I will go; don't trouble yourself about anything. The best thing would be," added Carafa, as he took his hand, "if you were to go to bed, and have a sleep."

"For a few hours," replied Renato. "At noon, if you have not returned, I shall go and pay a visit, and be out till three. This for your guidance."

"I understand. *Au revoir.*"

"Gentlemen," continued Carafa, turning towards the others; "shall we go? I am at your service."

The two gentlemen bowed; and having taken leave of the duke, they departed with Carafa.

Left alone in his rooms, Renato walked about for a little, depressed and melancholy, and feeling greatly bored. So, after spending a quarter of an hour in this way, without succeeding in clearing his mind, he shrugged his shoulders, and proceeded towards his bedroom.

He rang his bell, and his valet made his appearance at once.

"Wake me at eleven," he said, "unless Don Antonio Carafa should happen to call; he may come in at any hour."

"Yes, Eccellenza," replied the servant.

He then helped his master to undress, an operation which did not last many minutes; Renato being anxious to be left alone, and to have some sleep.

"Now," he said, getting into bed, and drawing the clothes over his shoulders; "close the windows and go. You understand? If Don Antonio comes——"

"I shall show him in, Eccellenza. If not, I shall wake you at eleven."

Let us leave Renato to his few hours' sleep, to awake at eleven, make his toilet, receive Carafa, who had had an interview with Gravina, and arranged a meeting with the enemy's seconds at nine o'clock in the evening; and let us prepare to follow him just after twelve, when our hero, in correct morning dress, with a roll in his hand, set out for the Strada del

Chiatamone; reached the Washington Hotel, and asked if Miss Temple could see him.

Renato's face bore no signs of his morning's annoyances. Grave and even sober-looking he always had been, and Antonio used to say that his friend never laughed outright. No wonder then if he looked grave this day, since such was his habitual expression.

Miss Temple's aunt was not visible when Renato appeared, but Miss Temple was; seated at her work-table in a window recess, with a view of the gulf, the island of Capri in the distance, and the Castello dell' Ovo just below. At the sight of Renato the girl made him a graceful bow, and wished him good morning, with a smile that would have won any one's heart.

"My aunt was tired after last night," said Miss Temple, giving her pretty hand to the Duke of Melito; "and required a good rest. She hopes you will excuse her."

"Oh, Signorina, it was not necessary indeed," he replied, with a bow; but without taking the chair which Miss Temple offered him courteously. "I am sorry to have come so soon, and after paying my respects to you——"

"You intend to go?" interrupted the girl. "But I won't allow it. I was quite expecting you."

"Really?" exclaimed Renato, taking the seat offered him.

"Of course," continued she; "did you not promise me some music?"

"And here it is. Did you really think, Signorina, that I could forget it?"

"Well, after all, it would have been no great harm; a promise made in a ball-room—— "

"Quite as sacred to a gentleman as one made anywhere, even in the presence of a magistrate," replied Renato, promptly.

"Ah, not so bad. You didn't say, before a lady. I see, you don't care to pay compliments."

"Quite true, Signorina. It's a great mistake sometimes."

"No, no, it is all right. I remarked it last night. You are very grave and nice, Signor Duca. All men ought to be so, leaving softness to us, as it is supposed to add to our charms. Oh, I knew at once what you were like; confess that I showed some penetration at least."

"If you will allow me, Signorina, I shall content myself with thanking you. As to praising you, I shall do it some other time, when I can do it without flattering my own *amour propre*."

"All right; I deserve this little reproof. No, no, don't apologize; I deserve it and I like it, and esteem you all the more. And now let me inspect the music. I like Neapolitan songs so much; and I am all attention when these street singers stop before the hotel. I don't understand the dialect, but melody happily is cosmopolitan."

So saying, Miss Temple opened the roll of music and turned over some of the pages, humming a few passages here and there.

"If my aunt were awake," she said, "I should like to try them all on the piano."

Renato immediately got up to go.

"I am intruding, I fear," he said.

"Not at all," replied Miss Temple, "please stay, Signor Duca, if you have nothing of importance to do. As my aunt is in bed, we can't have music; but we can talk, it seems to me. Let us discuss a hundred things, without any ceremony, as if we were a couple of—cousins."

Renato was agreeably impressed with this friendly reception. Miss Temple's ways pleased him, with their fresh mixture of liveliness and languor; he liked her easy manners, with their almost childish candour, above all, he liked her peculiar pronunciation. She spoke Italian extremely correctly, with an accent different from any one else, and remarkable from the slight drawl with which she pronounced her vowels; a drawl that in a man would have been ridiculous, but from her lips was quite pretty. Renato might have said of himself like Dante, "io era in tra color che son sospesi;" and his state of absorption might be proved by the fact that, while he hung on those sweet lips and looks, the image of Margherita never left his eyes. He would like to have seen them both—one beside the other. Both had black hair—Margherita was more pink and white, taller and more majestic; Sarah, darker, shorter, and livelier; the former more of a goddess, the latter more of a woman. This uncertain feeling, not daring to examine itself, by no means prevented sympathy; indeed Sarah's last words were of a kind so suitable to his case, that he felt drawn to reply, almost gaily, "Very well, like cousins!"

But Renato's joy was of short duration; for Miss Temple replied almost in a tone of correction—

"Though, if we are to believe certain reports, there is some talk of making us man and wife."

This was a direct thrust, and Renato felt stunned. Who could have told the Temples of this plan? Certainly not his father, therefore it must have been Mr. Mapleson, and even before the Caivano family had settled to enter the lists. What right had he to be so officious? And worse still, and this naturally struck him particularly, what object had Miss Temple in making this speech? Was it in keeping with the reserve so becoming in a young lady?

All these confused ideas passed through his mind, and he could not attempt to collect himself just then as, first of all, he had to make her some reply.

"Signorina," he said, moving uneasily, "it is my father's plan."

"And not yours?" the girl asked, looking him straight in the face, as if she would like to extract the truth from him.

"I didn't say so," stammered Renato, who could not quite see what Miss Temple was driving at, and was beginning to lose patience; "but—before answering your question, I should like to ask you one."

"Oh, I see it all," she replied, promptly. "Your very reticence tells me that the design is none of yours. It is all right, and I must thank you for letting me see it. Are you surprised? That's a secret of mine, a cousinly secret," she added with a knowing smile, "you may guess it, if you can, or wait for a good opportunity. As for the rest it doesn't matter. Let our fathers talk, and arrange things as it seems best to them. In the meantime, we may

study each other at our ease, beginning with our weaknesses. For instance, you, my cousin—may I not?"

"Yes—cousin!" replied Renato, hardly knowing whether to be angry or not, but submitting involuntarily to this peculiar candour.

"Well, you, for example, are very reserved. Oh, I saw it at once. I like grave people, and people chary of compliments even more. But you, Signor Duca, you are a perfect Spanish hidalgo. I should like to know you better. A certain composure is the outward symptom, the sign of goodness."

"You are right, Miss Temple; but I am not so reserved as you think. I am *rather* reserved, and this, if it is a defect is not my fault. The outer man, after all, doesn't signify much; I only comport myself like certain bivalves of our shores—I defend myself."

"Yes, of course. But be a little less on your guard with ladies, pray. Just now, when I suggested the idea of our being married, you looked so black!"

"I don't know what the expression of my face may have been," said Renato; "but even admitting that it was black, do you think that people can listen to some things with an unmoved countenance?"

"Well, it was no crime, I suppose!" exclaimed Miss Temple, laughing.

"No, certainly not, but can't you or any one else imagine that some other reason——"

"Oh, how you run on," she interrupted. "Now, just remember my words: 'There is some plan of making us man and wife,' was what I said. And this, even without suggesting it as an idea of any particu-

lar person, either of your family nor mine, forbids its being considered as coming from yours alone, does it not? Come, confess you have been too sophistical."

"But I said nothing, it seems to me."

"Still you looked like thunder, and this was no imagination on my part; it was the simple fact."

There was no possibility of getting the better of this imp of a girl, nor shaking her off. Renato contented himself with a smile.

"Ah, all right, I am glad," she said. "We are friends then?"

"Yes."

"And you won't take offence at any of my remarks, will you? Sometimes you will think them rather odd from a young lady, but time will justify me, and show that I could and should talk as I do. Therefore, cousin, you will do me a favour, by believing it once for all."

"Blindly!" replied Renato.

Miss Temple held out her hand to him, but almost immediately drew it back. Just at that moment the door opened.

"The Duke of Melito," a servant announced, at the door.

"What is this?" exclaimed Renato, looking round.

But he did not expect an answer, or, rather, the words were not uttered fully before he remarked that the servant after announcing his name, made way for some one to come in.

Accordingly, that moment, a very good-looking young gentleman made his appearance—fair-haired, lithe, and of noble bearing, a perfect Apollo as

people say, but an Apollo breathing life from every pore.

Renato looked at him, and thought he must have seen him somewhere else, or some one very like him. The new-comer, too, looked at Renato, but with a look of quiet curiosity, and he hesitated only for a moment, uncertain whether his entrance were not inopportune.

"Come, Corrado, come!" said Miss Temple, regardless of the impression this familiar reception must make on Renato.

He then came forward eagerly, and took her hand. Miss Temple, having shown in this way on what terms they stood, rose from her chair with a grave expression on her face. Renato did the same. He saw that an introduction was coming, but he could not understand why she should put herself into the attitude of a priestess before an altar.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TWO COUSINS.

MISS TEMPLE, in the meantime, began—

"This meeting is quite accidental; I did not expect to see Signor Corrado this morning. But, since you are both here, gentlemen, I hope that you, the representatives of two hostile houses, though nearly related, will, in the presence of a lady, shake hands.

Renato looked perplexed. Corrado, for his part, guessing who he was, drew back.

"Well, what is the matter?" Miss Temple asked, in surprise.

"Because—this very moment I expect a certain answer from this gentleman," stammered Corrado, looking down.

"By this time my seconds must have already delivered it—an answer such as you wished for," retorted Renato. "This matter being settled, we may comply with the request of a lady, and greet one another."

With that he made him a low bow. Corrado did the same, then took a seat.

"You must forgive me," he said, to change the conversation, "for not having come to the ball last night. I have already made my apologies to Mr. Mapleson."

Miss Temple was occupied with something very different from the ball.

"Now, gentlemen, what is all this mystery?" she cried, looking first at one and then at the other of her two visitors. "Seconds! An answer expected! Speak, gentlemen, for God's sake! Have you quarrelled?"

"Eh!" said Renato, shrugging his shoulders, "so it seems."

"And you are cousins!" she remarked.

"We are," replied Renato.

"And you are going to fight?"

"Yes, if the duke will do me the honour," replied Corrado.

Miss Temple raised her eyes in the greatest dismay.

"Signorina, what can we do?" exclaimed Renato, endeavouring to remedy the error of his adversary, or rather the ill-turn which fortune had played them both. "We are slaves to the ideas of the world."

"And our own," added Corrado, who had less presence of mind.

"Why?" asked Renato, turning to him. "I have nothing to say to it. I am going to fight you without knowing why. Let us say the world's ideas then, not our own. Let us say yours, if you like; but not mine. Renato di Melito's habit is not to give offence to any

one; he allows no insults, accepts all provocations, all challenges, without any discussion, not setting any greater value on his life than it deserves, and that's all; he pledges himself no farther. But, excuse me, Signorina," added the Duke of Melito, suddenly recollecting himself; "the necessity of qualifying, as far as I am concerned, an expression of Signor Corrado Altavilla's made me forget that this is not fit conversation in the presence of a lady."

"You are mistaken," replied Miss Temple, "this is the place to discuss it. And since, sooner or later, I must meddle in a certain matter, it may as well be now. First of all, we are friends, are we not?"

"Yes; I said so, and I don't usually change."

"Very well, then!" she exclaimed. "Tell me, Signor Duca, do you not care for Margherita any longer?"

"Speranza!" cried Corrado, in a tone between anger and entreaty.

"Hush, I tell you, and obey me!" And with the gesture of a queen she imposed silence on Corrado.

In the meantime, to Renato, Margherita's name had been like a thunderbolt, which suddenly opened his eyes to the abyss before him.

"Signorina," he said, in confusion, "how do you come to know this name?"

"I shall tell you, if you will allow me. I am in the place of destiny, or, more exactly, I am a good fairy. An evil genius has tied the knots; I untie them. But let us begin at the beginning. My home was in America. You will think this strange after all that has been said of me and of my family, but so it

is; you are a friend, and I tell you a secret, which you will carefully keep to yourself. I lived in America, and there in my quiet abode an echo of your troubles reached me. I crossed the Atlantic; I came among you, and I learnt many things. I heard especially of an excellent man, a real gentleman, who had fallen in love with a girl without knowing that she was a relation of his own. He heard afterwards how it was, and, at the same time, he heard that the girl's family had some claims upon his. He was afraid to make himself known, as his relations had become acquainted with him under a different name, and by telling them who he was, they might have lost hope. To his father he dared not speak, for he knew his stern temper, and dreaded making matters worse. In short, he was in a very difficult position, and he came out of it like an honest man and a hero."

"Signorina!" exclaimed Renato, colouring.

"Let me proceed. I know all, you see; I know that this gentleman went to a great friend of his, a lawyer's, and said to him: 'I have become acquainted with relations, who have, or may have, some right to the property now enjoyed by us. They are poor, and could not afford the expense of a lawsuit. I daren't mention the subject to my father, because my meddling in the matter, and without knowing whether their claims are well-founded or not, might seem to him an affront to the memory of my grandfather. Do you take up our adversaries' cause, see the papers which they have so carefully preserved, and if you think the case worth bringing into court, do so; I undertake all expenses.'"

"Who is this?" cried Corrado, much moved.

"Your cousin, here," replied Miss Temple.

Corrado was dumbfoundered. Confused, or rather astonished, he turned his eyes from Miss Temple, who had known all this without telling him, to his Cousin Renato, whom he now saw under such a different character. And, we must confess, Corrado felt doubtful still, not daring to believe his own ears, so unexpected and strange were these revelations.

Not less astonished, but on other grounds, Renato looked at the girl as if he would fain discover in her lovely eyes the explanation of so many mysteries. Certainly his friend Garantini must have betrayed him. But for this very cautious person to reveal the greatest secrets of his profession such a way, he and Miss Temple must have exchanged confidences, and made a regular alliance, defensive and offensive. Then, how could this girl, lately come among them —and from where? From America, she said; and her intimacy with the young sailor was a proof of this. But who was she, after all? What interests connected her with Margherita, that she should deliberately interpose like a *Deus ex machina* in their little drama?

Renato's mind was lost in such a labyrinth, and this beautiful Ariadne had vouchsafed him no clue of any kind.

"Let us proceed," continued Miss Temple, as she saw that neither of her listeners seemed inclined to speak. "I learnt that this young fellow had been betrayed by a villain whose ambitious designs had been disturbed by his love for his beautiful cousin."

"Schisano," murmured Renato, to whom these latter words were a ray of light.

"Let us forget the names," continued the girl. "The villains need not know that we know them. How else could we discover their secret practices? His real name having been betrayed by the villain before he could honestly make himself known, his relations thought him a——"

"Enough, I entreat, Miss Temple?" interrupted Renato, a prey to the greatest agitation. "Oh, the infamous knave!"

"Upset by this catastrophe, the cause of which was unknown to him, the young gentleman fell seriously ill. In the meantime, advised by the villain, who had represented the poor relations as anxious to catch the heir, the father of the latter made a proposal to his cousin, which he considered insulting. A quarrel ensued between the two old gentlemen; settled then (by the intervention of a certain guardian angel), it has been revived to-day, I perceive, between the younger members. I perceive, I say, to my surprise, forgetting that these young ones feel the sulphur of their volcanoes in their veins."

The adversaries were speechless. A lady, a girl had put them to shame.

"And yet," she continued, after a moment's pause, 'you must admit, gentlemen, that I knew a great deal of your affairs, and was pretty well prepared for this serious discourse. Therefore one of you"—so saying Miss Temple had turned towards Renato—"one of you is perhaps asking himself: 'Who is this lady, and what is she doing here?' She, Signor Duca,

came of her own accord. She is not ashamed to confess it; she likes some one who is here. She meant to wait and to tell you some other time, when you and she had become friends. But this unexpected encounter compelled her to speak sooner than she intended, and perhaps it is better so. So she came to look her lovely rival in the face. This rival could not stand her ground; the fickle creature is going to wed another. And Signor Corrado," added Miss Temple, in a tone of the deepest concern, "intends to send a challenge to his fortunate supplanter. Here, Signor Duca, lay my error; I thought the danger lay there, and not here with you."

"The family first of all," said Corrado, who was looking more discomposed than ever at the thought of Annunziata and her Genoese lover.

"Thank you, for giving it the preference," retorted the girl, in a voice that trembled with anger. "But cheer up, Cousin Corrado, this wedding may not come off. Signor Palmanova no longer cares so much about it. The Pietri of Genoa have lost a considerable sum of money in a house at Buenos Ayres, and they are no longer such millionaires as formerly. Perhaps he may consider you a suitable match for his daughter."

Renato guessed the state of things between these two, and thought it better to interpose with one of those speeches that set people at their ease again.

"Signorina," he said, "let me answer for the gentleman whose patience you have been trying. Only that your words have agitated him so much, he might tell you, what I should tell you under similar

circumstances, that the Altavillas do not choose their wives at haphazard in this way, as they know how to choose and appreciate nobility like yours."

Corrado looked up at him, but not to contradict him. In those eyes Sarah and Renato could detect tears.

"Well, then, let us talk of something else," continued the girl. "The important part is still untold. I may consider you a friend, Renato Altavilla. You like me as well as ever?"

"Oh, from the first moment I saw you and spoke to you, Miss Temple," he exclaimed, in the most heartfelt tone. "Whatever plans our elders had made, or whatever might be in store for us, I felt I had a friend in you."

"Well done! You are a good fellow," replied she, as she took his hand. "Then tell your friend—or rather, to go back to our former terms—tell your cousin if there is still any coldness between you and Margherita."

"Margherita!" repeated Renato absently, in whose mind the beloved name awoke a tumult of affection, dormant, but not dead. "Is she not going to be married?"

"To whom?" asked Miss Temple, with a look between impatience and incredulity.

"Well, I didn't ask. To Signor Palmanova, or some one else whose name Signor Garantini did not think proper to tell me; he," added Renato, sarcastically, "who can give so much useful information——"

"To people who have shown that they deserve his confidence," retorted Miss Temple, promptly. "No; Signor Garantini, who gave me so much useful infor-

mation, gave me no hint of this very important thing," she added, laughing. "My dear cousin, depend upon it, this piece of news was premature, or utterly false."

"But what object could Garantini have had?"

"How can I tell? Probably to make you think of something else, which otherwise might not have entered your head," replied Miss Temple, looking down modestly. "Don't you see? People have been plotting a little against you. If it had not been for a little art on our part (and when I say our, I mean mine, speaking in royal fashion), how could you be here, Don Renato Altavilla, *alias* Errico di Sarno? Come now, don't colour up! It required some one to touch your heart, my poor Pharaoh."

"Ah, you thought my heart was dead, did you?" cried Renato, in a tone of anguish.

"I knew it perfectly well," remarked Miss Temple, "since you allowed your father to throw it at my feet. Oh, you needn't say anything, it wouldn't come up to what I think of you. I know you, my cousin, I know you as well as I know Margherita herself. You would have drifted away one from another more and more, without being able to forget each other, and you would have been unhappy for life. The heart goes its own way, unfortunately," exclaimed the girl, suppressing a sigh and checking herself as she was turning to Corrado. "But enough of that; let us come back to our own affairs, or rather to Margherita. The poor dear is not going to be married to any one, nor has she engaged herself to any one. She refused Palmanova a little while ago; hence, as perhaps you are not aware, the rage of this dreadful Signor

Martino, whom I have not the pleasure of knowing, but whom I cordially dislike, because, among other things, he must be a fool."

"A villain rather!" suggested Renato.

"It comes to the same thing nearly always," replied Miss Temple; "or, rather, fools make the most mischievous kind of villains. And Margherita has had experience of this—she who never looked any other man in the face since Errico di Sarno, and remains faithful to her first and only love."

Renato was a prey to violent emotions, and felt greatly inclined to shed tears. He jumped up from his chair, and forgetting where he was, began to pace up and down the room, rubbing his forehead like a person trying to rouse himself and to recover his self-possession. It was not with himself that he had to struggle, but with a feeling of too great and sudden happiness. Miss Temple (we may call her so for a little) left him to himself, and kept watching him steadily with the eye of a doctor watching a patient during the crisis and turning-point of an illness.

Renato at last recovered his composure, and a deep sigh announced the fact to Miss Temple.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "My head has been whirling round, but it is better now."

So saying, he turned to Corrado, who happened to be near him. Not a word had been exchanged between them after the passing allusion to their coming encounter. But Renato had a sense of greatness, and his generous nature could not be untrue to itself.

"My cousin," he began gravely, putting a hand on

his shoulder, "do you put faith in the word of a gentleman?"

"Yes," said the other, looking at him in astonishment, not knowing what was to follow.

"Well," proceeded Renato, "I swear, that had I been obliged to cross swords with you, I should only have used my own to cover my breast. This, I request you to tell your sister."

Corrado's reply was to burst into tears, and to throw himself into his cousin's arms. Renato gave him a kiss on the forehead; and that kiss, the reader may imagine, was not for himself alone.

Miss Temple drew a long breath. Peace between the two branches of the Altavilla family was concluded in the peace between the two young men. What remained to be done was of secondary importance, now that the dissevered ends were in the hands of this benign fairy.

"Gentlemen," she said, after giving them sufficient time to get over their emotion, "while you are giving each other a fraternal embrace, your seconds, perhaps, are arranging the terms of the encounter. This is a peculiar state of things, is it not?"

"My second is Don Antonio Carafa," replied Renato. "He knows all my secrets, and will be happy to know that matters have been arranged between us. The Prince of Gravina too, my *témoin*, is a perfect gentleman, and will be glad to see the temple of Janus closed."

"Ah, all right. May it always remain closed for everybody!" exclaimed the girl. "And your seconds, who are they?" she added, turning to Corrado.

"Two excellent fellows, university friends."

"Sensible people, then," remarked Renato. "They will be as glad to see it settled as my two will be."

"Moreover," continued Miss Temple, "the challenge came from you, Corrado; and though I don't understand much about these things, it seems to me——"

"Yes, all right, cousin," interrupted Corrado; "I am to blame, and I will bear the penalty."

"No, not so," said Renato, promptly. "You must not withdraw the challenge. My Cousin Corrado must not begin life, as people say, with a bit of weakness. Let us go to our seconds arm in arm, let us tell them how we met and settled our quarrel privately, and that they have nothing else to do to make things straight but to go through four simple ceremonies. If necessary we shall go to our fathers' seconds, and wind up that other business, which left the opening for ours."

"You have a heart of gold!" cried Miss Temple, enthusiastically.

"Ah, yes, heart of iron and heart of gold!" replied Renato, with a smile. "We have both in the Altavilla coat-of-arms. Then it is settled, Cousin Corrado? We are to see our respective emissaries, heart in hand, the aforesaid heart of gold, and see if they are determined to make us fight whether we like it or not."

"The sooner the better," replied Corrado. "Very well; but with your permission, I should like to say a few words to Miss Temple first."

"Speranza Zuniga," said she, correcting him. "Temple is the name of my companion."

"Ah!" exclaimed Renato amazed. "Speranza."

"Zuniga, at your service—a cousin, like you, of Corrado Altavilla, but by his mother's side, born at Lima, and dwelling on the banks of the Tunguragua, in Peru, on the borders of Brazil, and close to the Andes. But all these details you can learn better afterwards, if you have any wish to know them. I had to leave home, come to Naples, do a world of things —and you see how many I have done already, so that my long journey has not been entirely useless——"

"I should think not!" said Renato, after nodding his head repeatedly.

"Then, as you can well imagine, an incognito was necessary in such delicate matters. If our common enemies, those who are interested in keeping you asunder, had known that I was a cousin of Margherita Altavilla, I should certainly never have attained my ends. Some knotty points I might have cleared up. Yes, certainly, with money one can do a great deal; but some others, I could not have managed. For example, you would not be here as Corrado's friend; and there are other things about which we need not speak now."

Her reticence made Renato's heart beat violently.

"You will think this change of name rather odd," continued Speranza, "after so many introductions to me, Speranza Zuniga; to my companion, the only Temple of the party; and to my uncle, Don José Moreno, who had no little trouble to forget his customary Spanish, and to remember his English instead, learnt at New Orleans in his youth. But as I don't intend to remain in Naples, my flight of fancy can't give rise to much talk."

"Disappear from these parts, after having showered so many blessings on us!" exclaimed Renato, and his voice betrayed how much he was concerned. "Oh, Sarah! oh, Speranza! you are an angel indeed!"

"So I have been already told in America," she replied, in a melancholy voice; "and then I thought it too much or too little."

"Now, cousin!" cried Corrado, in a tone of entreaty.

"Well, well!" she continued, shaking her pretty hand. "Get away, Corrado, I have to hear what your cousin, mine no longer, has got to say."

"Why? I certainly hope to become so in reality, after enjoying so much being your cousin in jest."

Speranza pretended not to understand.

"Let me hear what you have to say, then," she replied. "Corrado will wait for you in the next room."

"No, he can stay here quite well. I haven't much to say."

"It might be more than you think," she replied. "Corrado, go."

So saying, she held out her pretty hand to her cousin. Corrado took it reverently in his, and kissed it.

"Signorina," said Renato, "how can I see Margherita again, and Signor Ruggero?"

"This question I quite expected," she replied. "You must go to Petraia, to the San Martino baths. Their house is number eleven. But don't go to-day, I entreat," she added, as she bethought herself. "I will prepare them for your visit."

"Thank you!" exclaimed Renato. "But now that I think of it, I sha'n't go even to-morrow. I will do my best, and I shall succeed, never fear."

"And wherefore this change, may I ask?"

"Because I ought not to be the first to go; my father, the Prince of Caivano, should go first."

Speranza looked in his face, and he seemed to her transfigured.

"You will do this?" she asked, seizing his hand eagerly.

"Or die in the attempt; upon my word."

"No, no: you will succeed, for your father is a gentleman, and he can't bear ill-will to a girl like Margherita; because he is fond of you, and he can't wish to see you unhappy. Moreover, now that I think of it—you see I am repeating your own words," added she, suddenly changing her tone, "now that I think of it, I can be of some assistance to you in this matter."

"Really?"

"Judge for yourself. Now, was I not right in saying that our conversation might be long? Sit down there; your Cousin Corrado can wait for five minutes more."

"And he won't be jealous of me," added Renato.

"Oh, certainly not; he is more jealous of the little Genoese," replied Speranza; and her tone betrayed some bitterness.

"*A propos*," said Renato, "what is this story? It seems to me there is a cloud of some kind; I hope it is only a passing one."

"You must ask him."

"I certainly will. It's the least I can do to make some return to others for all they have done for me."

"Please don't take that tone with him," exclaimed she. "I, Speranza, do love Corrado, and I have no wish to make a secret of it; but I know what I am worth, and I don't care to be loved by him out of charity. What I have done, and what I mean to do, is quite independent of my feelings towards my cousin. I, too, have a motto on my coat-of-arms," she added, drawing herself up with honest pride; "and my motto is this: 'Do what is right, whatever betide.' Now let us go back to your affairs; this is all I have to say."

Another conversation began here, which I need not report, as this chapter is long enough already, and the subject of discourse will be revealed in due time.

"And you know this, too?" exclaimed Renato, when Speranza had finished.

"Have I not told you that I know everything? Vito Schisano is in my hands. The villain suspects that the precious document is among the papers in the old princess's possession, and he hopes to get it into his clutches, and to do what he likes with it. You can prevent him."

"Never fear; I must settle this business of the seconds, and then see to it with all speed."

So saying, Renato took leave, also with a kiss, a most respectful one, merely touching the tips of the fingers of his lovely friend. He had gone to visit Sarah Temple, a daughter of Albion; he took leave of Speranza Zuniga, a daughter of Peru, and the Queen of Tunguragua.

CHAPTER XXVI.

VITO SCHISANO'S LEGACY.

THE duel business being arranged, Renato Altavilla had still plenty to occupy him. In Miss Temple's, or, more exactly, Donna Speranza Zuniga's presence, everything had seemed quite easy; but left alone before the stronghold to be taken by assault, he felt all the difficulty of the undertaking, and the gravity of the promise made in obedience to a generous impulse.

His father, especially, how would he receive his disclosures? To explain everything to him was impossible, for Don Federigo would take Speranza's diplomacy very ungraciously, and there was the danger of a scene with Mr. Mapleson. Therefore, he must put himself forward; and this required some courage, as his suspicions were certain to be aroused. And then his grandmother. How was he to begin to tell her all that was necessary under the circumstances!

Still, he could not hesitate. He thought of Marghe-

rita, expecting, with every right, this exertion from him; the voice of honour made itself heard, crying that this was no time for weakness, and the voice of honour prevailed. He had gone to seek counsel from Garantini, and from him he had heard many words of wisdom.

"Courage! This is a case for courage. See what an example a girl like Speranza Zuniga sets you! She descends on us like a thunderbolt, without regarding any one; because she is in love, and would fain be happy, or else drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs. What has become of her rival? I don't know, neither does Corrado, who just now can't think of anything except the magnanimity of his beautiful cousin. Speranza Zuniga is not absorbed in herself; she knows Margherita's troubles, and the other misfortunes of her family; and with a bleeding heart of her own, she becomes the consoler of others. When she called on me to hear all the particulars of the case, she did make an impression on me. For a moment or two I thought her a little crazy; and that was when, after making all inquiries, she suddenly revealed her plan of campaign, sprung up like a mushroom. Can you believe it? She contrived to meet your father's secretary, the worthy Turiello Schisano, and gave him to understand that she was in love with the Duke of Melito; and that she would suffer no intriguing on his part. 'Signor Schisano,' she said, 'you would fain secure a good match for one of your daughters; but mind, I intend you shall not; choose now between my patronage and a handsome reward for your services, or your dismissal from the

Prince of Caivano, who shall be informed of this and of your other machinations.' That was a good beginning of the campaign!"

"And Signor Turiello?" asked Renato.

"Signor Turiello! The honest Iago lost his head. 'Signora,' he replied, 'I would be no obstacle; because I know it would be the case of the earthen pot and the brass pot over again. But there are some other obstacles. The Duke of Melito is in love with some one else, a cousin of his; and it is against her you should be on your guard.' And so he fell into the trap, the old fox. Miss Temple, feigning herself Margherita's rival, and the enemy of the whole family, won Schisano as an ally; an ally by force, as I was by choice, so much so as to tell you a lie on a certain occasion, for which, I have still to crave your forgiveness. How could I help it? She had bewitched me. Her plan was an audacious one. I saw that very well; but fortune favours the brave. Moreover, our good angel contrived to get round that villain so well, that she could do anything with him; she got all his most valuable secrets from him, and if he didn't deliver the famous will to her, for which she would have given two hundred thousand lire, it was not his fault, you may depend; for he did his best, I assure you—his very best."

"Wonderful girl!" exclaimed Renato. "My Cousin Corrado must throw himself at her feet, or he and I will come to blows."

"Do you think so? Go, then, and take example by her courage. A man like you should have as much as she has. Besides, the Prince of Caivano

could not be desperately obstinate after Margherita's tears."

Renato looked at his friend in the greatest surprise.

"When was that?" he asked, seeing that the lawyer gave a nod of his head in confirmation.

"When you were in bed, my dear Renato, with that unlucky fever; and your father made that trip which led to a quarrel between him and Signor Ruggero. The poor girl, accompanied by her landlady, old Signora Concetta, your old acquaintance, was in Palazzo Caivano, not far from you, kneeling at Don Federigo's feet, and entreating him not to go on with this unfortunate quarrel."

"Ah, then it was to please her—— "

"That an arrangement was come to, certainly; and, I must say, Don Federigo showed much consideration. I may add that Donna Margherita, while your father was engaged with his seconds, after their interview with Don Ruggero, was shown into the old princess's room, and conversing with her, waited for the end of the conversation."

"And my grandmother knew who she was?" Renato asked, wondering more and more at these revelations of Signor Garantini.

"I think not, because Donna Margherita was charged to tell her nothing, and the prince, on his part, could not wish her to know."

Renato remained a few minutes lost in thought. This circumstance, of which till now he had been in ignorance, seemed to him providential.

"And my father saw her," he remarked then;

" he spoke to her, and went his own ways after all ? "

" Of course," replied Garantini, shrugging his shoulders. " When your fathers take a thing like that into their heads, nothing can turn them, unless necessity compels them. In short," said Garantini, in conclusion, " go in and win. *Macte animo, generose puer!* You must show yourself worthy of her. Promise me ! "

Renato gave his friend's hand a good squeeze, and that squeeze was better than any promise.

He arrived at Palazzo Caivano a few minutes before dinner. Don Federigo was in excellent humour. The worthy gentleman had slept sweetly till four o'clock in the afternoon, dreaming about Miss Temple's six millions, which were to add so much lustre to the House of Caivano. Six and two make eight—all for his son's children, all quite certain.

As soon as he caught sight of Renato, he drew him into the recess of a window.

" Well," he said, " have you been visiting Mrs. Temple ? "

" Yes," stammered Renato, unprepared for so sudden an attack.

" And Miss Temple ? "

" She is an angel," replied Renato, evading the question.

But his father had him there, with his back to the wall, and he had no idea of letting him go.

" When may I go," continued Don Federigo, " to propose in form ? "

" I—really don't know," said Renato. " Is it not rather soon ? "

"Soon!" repeated Don Federigo, raising his eyebrows. "Ah, you think it too soon?"

"Yes, I think so."

"This morning, though, you said——"

"True, father; but on more consideration——"

"On more consideration, you have changed your mind," added the prince, sternly.

"No indeed; but, my dear father," replied Renato, making a great effort, "let us say no more on the subject at present. See, here comes my grandmother! And if you would do me a favour——"

"Let me hear!" said the prince, looking at him as if he would fain read his inmost thoughts.

"I should like," continued Renato, "an hour's conversation with you, early to-morrow."

"And why not this evening?"

"Well, this evening," replied Renato, disconcerted. "But you would have to give up the theatre and your visits for a conversation of little importance, or, rather, for which there is no hurry."

Renato hoped to gain time, thinking that his best plan would be to begin with his grandmother.

"To-morrow, then," said the prince, with a look that boded no good. "But mind, Don Renato; this is not more childishness, I hope."

Renato bent his head, as the reed bends before the wind, and then advanced to meet his grandmother to kiss her. With her he felt stronger. The old princess kissed him on the forehead in return.

"God bless you, my dear boy!" she said, taking him affectionately by the hand. "I hear you had little sleep this morning."

"Who told you so, grandmother?"

"Pietro; I ask him every day how you are. You know, my boy, how fond I am of you."

"Dear grandmother! See, I am all right. At my age, an hour more or less doesn't signify."

"At mine, you should say. At your age a few hours extra are useful."

During this conversation, they were on their way to the dining-room. On these occasions Renato always took the old lady on his arm. His mother took Don Federigo's, as her custom had been since their early married days; and so they walked first out of the room with all due formality. The dinner was rather stiff; for the prince was as menacing as Jove in his cloud. Donna Maria, his wife, thought it better when her husband was not talking much to keep absolute silence. Donna Grazia, their daughter, preserved that silence which is supposed to be the greatest adornment of young unmarried ladies. The old princess, on the strength of her years, spoke as much as she liked, but she felt the chill in the air; from time to time she addressed her conversation to Renato, and he replied pleasantly enough, but only to let the subject drop. He too was absorbed in his own reflections, and with good reason. Much had happened that day already, and much remained to be done. That very evening he must explode a bomb in the midst of this peaceful domestic scene. Poor grandmother! So quiet and composed! And he, her beloved grandson, her Benjamin, must suddenly destroy her peace of mind, so important always, but especially when people are over seventy.

And yet it was necessary; his feelings as a gentleman urged him to it, backed by all Speranza Zuniga's words, and the designs of the Prince of Caivano.

Like everything else, the dinner came to an end. Don Federigo, after kissing his mother's hand, and touching Donna Maria's, retired to his rooms to change his clothes, and, as he sometimes said when he was in a good humour, equip himself for war. The ladies had retired to the room where they usually spent the evenings. The weather was cold but fine, and below, along the Riviera di Chiaia carriages were coming and going like an evening in autumn.

"Grandmother, what do you think of a drive?" Renato asked. "Shall I order the carriage?"

"Why not?" said the old lady. "A little change will do me good. And your sister might come too. As for you, my dear Maria, I daren't ask you, as you care so little about going out!"

"My dear mother," replied Donna Maria, shaking her head, "you know when I don't go with Don Federigo I like better to stay at home."

Renato had gone to give the necessary orders to the coachman. In about twenty minutes, the carriage was ready in the courtyard of the palace, and Donna Anna took her seat along with Renato and his sister.

Renato had not intended his sister to be of the party, a listener by no means welcome to his conversation with his grandmother. But there was no help for it, and his talk had to be deferred till some other time. They drove off in the direction of Santa Lucia. Renato would rather have gone through the higher streets, the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, for

instance; but he soon came to the conclusion that this was not an hour for unfrequented places, and told the coachman to go on towards Piliero and Marinella, after passing the Palazza Reale. He was leaving Margherita behind, but at least he would see the places through which he had followed her the day he met her first. Opposite the Immacolatella he even exclaimed—"Here she is!" loud enough to startle the old princess.

"What is it?" she asked him.

"Nothing, nothing," he replied, recovering himself; "I was thinking about something, and I spoke without intending it."

Donna Anna pretended to be satisfied; but in her heart she felt uneasy, as for some time she had remarked that Renato was more silent and absent-minded than usual.

On their return, as they were getting out of the carriage, and while the duchess was going up the steps, Renato said to his grandmother, in a low voice—

"This evening, if possible, I should like to have a talk with you."

"Now, if you like," replied Donna Anna.

"No, I have a good deal to say, and I don't want any one to know."

"Love affairs?" said the old lady with a smile, as she took her grandson's arm.

"And a question of honour," he added, promptly.

"You mustn't frighten me, please," she replied, misunderstanding him.

"Oh, there is nothing to be frightened about in what I have to tell you. It is about yourself, I want

to talk to you; you can help me, dear grandmother; so you see there is nothing to be alarmed about."

"Very well," replied the old lady; "come at ten, when I shall be in my own room, and you can tell me anything you like. And now, don't trouble yourself about me, your sister will keep me company; and you must wish to go somewhere—to the theatre, perhaps. You look so melancholy, my dear boy! A little variety will be good for you."

At the hour appointed the Duke of Melito knocked at his grandmother's door. The princess was seated on a sofa, in front of her a table of lacquer work, inlaid with gold in the Chinese fashion, with an open Bible before her, in which the old lady read every evening before she went to bed.

"Grandmother," said Renato, as he came in, "I am keeping you out of your bed."

"No, no," replied Donna Anna, shaking her head decidedly, "you know that at my age people don't sleep much, and they think a great deal while they are lying awake. And then, you know, I am always glad to see you and to have a talk with you. Are you not my favourite child?"

"Oh, grandmother, I am so glad to hear you talk like that, for I want your help more than ever."

"Really! It must be something very serious then!"

"Very serious. You must hear and judge for yourself. I am in love."

"So I guessed," said his grandmother, with a smile. "And this may be serious or not, according to circumstances. First of all, who are you in love with?"

"The best and most lovely woman on earth."

"Without exception?"

"Oh, of course with some exceptions, you first of all," replied Renato, trying to enliven a little his doleful tale.

"Thank you," replied Donna Anna, giving him a kiss on the forehead. "And tell me, am I acquainted with this wonderful beauty?"

"Yes."

"Let me guess. The young Duchess of Gerace? or of Nicandro? The heiress of San Severino? These are the three Graces of Naples."

"You haven't guessed her yet," replied Renato.

"Let us come then to the marchionesses, or countesses if you like."

"No, you needn't go beyond duchesses," replied he; "but after all, you saw her for so short a time, you must have forgotten her. There's no one so lovely, and she is an angel of goodness, such as you must have been when you were twenty."

"Flatterer! But I don't see where the difficulty can be," said the princess.

"Oh, the difficulty is very real indeed. The girl I am in love with is the daughter of my father's enemy, the bringer of the lawsuit against us."

The old lady gave a jump where she sat on her sofa. Along with the image of the son of her brother-in-law, of the man who bore her husband's name, there rushed into her mind the damaging suspicions thrown on the memory of her father, Vito Schisano, expressed by Signor Garantini during the recent trial between Ruggero Altavilla and her son, Don Federigo.

Renato remarked what an unfavourable impression his words had made.

"You see, grandmother; you see the difficulty yourself."

"It is very great," replied Donna Anna; "perhaps insuperable. But tell me, Renato, how did you come to know these people?"

"Oh, that would take too long to tell."

"They have entrapped you and caught you."

"No, indeed; you are mistaken," interrupted Renato, impetuously. "Putting aside all my feelings as a lover, all prepossessions, I swear to you, on my honour, by your faith in this holy book," and he touched the Bible lying open on the table, "that we met and talked together without knowing who we really were, either of us; that no word was said, no flattery used to entrap me; and, finally, when they found out who I was, these relations of ours forbid me their house. Don't blame them, grandmother, I entreat; it is all the work of destiny. Destiny brought us together; now she must be mine, or I shall die in despair."

"This is even more serious," remarked the princess, on whose pale face the severe expression had changed into one of the greatest concern.

"Yes, even more serious," continued Renato, "because I have no longer any choice. Don't imagine that Margherita forgets what she owes to her own people, and to the name which she must one day bear," he added, promptly; "it is I that am in difficulties. I am giving you pain, I know; but now you must hear everything. There is a person who dis-

covered my secret in some inexplicable way, and has contrived to do great mischief. And all for what reason? Because, I am told, he wished one of his daughters to be a duchess."

"Turiello!" exclaimed the princess. "Yes, he talked of this plan even to me."

"I don't say," continued Renato, "that his daughters aren't nice girls, and deserve every——"

"Yes, yes, all right," interrupted his grandmother; "but there is a reason better than all his planning. The Duke of Melito cannot marry a daughter of Turiello Schisano. One Schisano has married into this house, and that is more than enough."

"Oh, grandmother," exclaimed Renato, in a tone of affectionate reproof. "Why should you say so? Have you not been the good angel of our family? And in presence of real nobility like yours, he should——"

"I know what you mean," replied the princess, interrupting him; "but believe me, my dear boy, if your grandmother carried her head high, she was none the happier for her father's great achievement in marrying her to a son of the Prince of Caivano. Still," added Donna Anna, in a voice trembling with emotion, "she knows in her heart that she has borne the name of Altavilla as nobly as any gentlewoman of the blood of Aragon, or of Swabia, could have done."

These words of the old princess were not only a solemn attestation of the real state of the case, but also the outpourings of a mind pent up till now; like an offering made by the venerable old lady of a long, saddened youth, perhaps the repressed feelings of a

heart longing also for a happiness not to be found within the walls of her home. And Renato, agitated, and at the same time full of admiration, felt as if he had never before properly loved the excellent old lady.

"Tell me now," continued Donna Anna, going back to the subject of their conversation; "where did I meet the lady in question?"

"You saw her, and in this very house; my father introduced her to you."

"Ah!" exclaimed the old lady, with a burst of recollection; "that dear girl?"

"Yes, coming here, like the angel of peace, to reconcile her father and mine just about to fight a duel."

"Good God! More hatred!" cried Donna Anna, clasping her hands with a terrified look. "Poor dear! I took it for granted that she had come to ask a favour of some kind; but I never dreamt that she was an Altavilla. She is really wonderfully lovely."

"Ah, isn't she? She made an impression on you too."

"Yes, indeed; but what can I do for her? In these matters especially, your father won't hear of any interference."

"He sha'n't make a sacrifice of me!" burst forth Renato. "And then, you see, grandmother, we are not only connected with this family; but they have claims on us too. We have profited by an iniquitous law, which deprived them of their part of my great-grandfather's property. And there is no good in saying that this decree was given by our legitimate kings; this legitimacy avails nothing when brought face to

face with private rights, and the dictates of immutable justice. Not only this, but there was a will in favour of the elder branch; and this will disappeared one fine day—to their loss, to our gain, it disappeared."

"You also? you also?" cried the princess, looking at her grandson in amazement. "It is strange this persistent belief in a will, even in our family. Even—Turiello, who has little reason to believe in it, he comes to me, and asks if I know anything of it. As if I could ever have had a share in such infamy; and even, after supposing such a thing possible, could have remained a day longer in Palazzo Caivano!"

"Don't agitate yourself, please, dear grandmother. You know I am only speaking from hearsay, like many others. I don't know what Signor Turiello thinks, or what he may have said to you. But, you see, there is an entry in the Melito notary's book—an entry certainly of no value in a court of justice, but in our consciences as honest men——"

"And why," interrupted Donna Anna, "why should the will not have been made, and then destroyed by the testator himself?"

"Let us admit that," replied Renato; "but then, why should the entry have remained in the notary's book, and no record remain of the circumstance of the alteration of the will?"

The old lady had nothing to say to this objection.

"Then," he proceeded, "it is to you I turn. I, the last of the Altavillas, and your beloved grandson; I, who have sworn to myself never to do or to consent to anything that can dim the lustre of our name. Does not your blood flow in my veins? And do not

these feelings come from you? Let us search, dear mother—for so I must call you—let us search together. If this document exists, cannot you help me to recover it? If it has been destroyed, cannot you help me at least to find some trace of it?"

"In what way?" asked Donna Anna, disconcerted by Renato's persistence. "I know nothing; before God, I swear that I know nothing!"

"I believe you, dearest grandmother; I believe you," he said, kneeling before her, and kissing her hands respectfully. "But, you see, if, without knowing anything, among your family documents—and you have a good many. I remember, when I was a child you used to show me sometimes a book covered with parchment, containing the history of our family."

"True," replied the princess; "but what has this old manuscript to do with a will made at the end of the last century, or the beginning of this one?"

"I know it has nothing to do with it," said her grandson, again; "but I remember that along with that manuscript there were some bundles of yellow papers, which, you said, had belonged to your father. I don't mean to say that my great-grandfather's will was there," added Renato, who felt that he was treading on dangerous ground, "but there might possibly be among them a letter, a note, a scrap of paper, bearing upon a circumstance so important to us. And then supposing there were nothing? So much the better; we should have lifted a weight off our minds, and then we might rest in peace."

The old princess had been listening to him with great attention; and his reasoning must have taken

effect, for she paused a little before replying. A great struggle was going on in the mind of the poor old lady, who certainly never could have thought of questioning the probity of her father.

"Be it so, then," she exclaimed at last; "I will grant your request. Don Renato, Duke of Melito, are you not the last of the princes of Caivano; and will you not one day be master of everything here? And is it not right that you should respect your forefathers? So look into everything," she added, with a sigh, as she rose; leaning her right hand on the book open before her. "I trust that God will grant me the consolation of seeing your suspicions removed."

"My dear mother, have I not told you openly what I think? And can you think that I suspect——"

"That will do, my dear boy; that will do," interrupted the old lady. "We can't always control our minds, and keep evil thoughts at a distance."

So saying, she went to an ebony cabinet of cinquecento work, in imitation of architecture, with stone bas-reliefs, little columns, and bronze statues, surmounted by the Altavilla arms and the ducal coronet. She touched a button skilfully hidden by an ornament of gilt bronze: the cabinet opened, and revealed the interior, all filled with papers in exquisite order—some loose, some tied up with tape and cord, according to their importance or the order in which they were arranged.

"This is the inheritance of Vito Schisano," said the old lady, in a solemn voice. "The trusty confidant of the Altavillas had nothing to reproach himself with except the wish to see a ducal coronet on his daughter's

head. Moreover, he died poor, and this was his only bequest to your grandmother."

As to the poverty of Vito Schisano, the Duke of Melito knew how it was. Annella had no fortune, and that was reasonable enough; but her brothers certainly were not left unprovided for. Still he did not venture to contradict his grandmother, whose faith was evidently sincere.

"Examine them one by one, these papers," continued Donna Anna; "for fifty years they have lain in this place, and I thought they might have lain there fifty more, till the end of my days. I never thought that they would be useful to accuse or excuse any one. 'Of no use to any one else' (as my father said when he consigned them to me), 'they will be dear to you, who will preserve them carefully as mementoes of the family you were separated from to enter that of your master's. If one day you feel sad, feeling yourself less loved or less respected than you ought to be, read these papers to remind you of your own people, and you will forgive your father for the sake of the love he bore you.'"

"Did he say so, dear mother?" Renato asked, struck by the words which to him seemed so applicable.

"Yes, I remember it as if it were yesterday. He was sad; I need not now explain why, after fifty years; and my poor father seemed to have a presentiment that one day I might have reason to regret that marriage, contracted under circumstances so unequal for me."

Renato paid little heed to this hint, which gave so

reasonable an explanation of Vito Schisano's words. He had interpreted them in his own fashion, and no explanation except circumstantial evidence could have made him change his opinion. The missing will must be there, hidden in those papers, apparently so innocent. A double-edged weapon in the hands of Vito Schisano—this cabinet on his death should remain in his daughter's, to secure her standing in that house where her father's ambition had introduced her.

"And you never had any occasion to read, or even to glance at these family papers," he asked, afterwards, as he was taking out a bundle to put it on the little table under the light of the lamp.

"No, I told you I never looked at them, except at some by chance when I had to look for the manuscript history of the Altavillas, left in my custody by your grandfather, Don Ruggero."

"You allow me, then, to look through them?" replied he; "and you promise me to look on this as a bit of curiosity merely, and not a want of trust?"

Donna Anna shook her head gently, and gave her grandson a melancholy glance, showing plainly that she was not to be deceived by this speech intended to cover his impatience.

"Yes, my dear boy," she then said; "do as you like. In the meantime I shall read my prayer-book," and the old lady bent her head over the Bible, which she had drawn nearer to her, to the edge of the table. Not that she had by any means recovered her composure at this critical moment, and her silvery locks were shaking where they rested against the book,

while Renato was examining with feverish anxiety the bundles of papers which he had just taken out of the cabinet.

The first he examined were letters, deeds of sale, receipts, and similar papers of little importance ; but all about the affairs of the Schisano family. All these were loose sheets, few of two or three sheets ; no sign of a will among them, and Renato thrust them all summarily aside, to examine several larger packets, fastened with cord.

These were papers originally folded in four, then carefully folded in two, some tinged yellow with the lapse of years, some bluish, written in a hundred different hands and a hundred different shades of ink ; letters, in short, from many different people, who in the course of thirty or forty years had corresponded with Vito Schisano ; some were from eminent men in science, literature, and politics—almost all friends of the Caivano family, guests at the Castello di Melito, who had kept up a correspondence with the agent, secretary, or whatever he was, of the family. Vito Schisano had originally been a mere major-domo, but his agreeable manners and his way of making himself necessary to his master, together with the familiarity which so easily springs up in the intimacy of country life, had gradually promoted him to the post of confidant and right-hand man, looked up to by all the rest ; finally, the marriage of his daughter with Don Ruggero, had been the crowning point of his career, so that he could say that in the Castle of Melito there was no one higher than he. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if so many illustrious

persons, more or less celebrities, should have been in correspondence with the worthy agent, half-domestic, half-seneschal, and, taking all in all, the real master of the house.

Not that they were all letters addressed to him. Taking up a few here and there by chance, Renato found that they were written to and written by different people. There were letters from old patriots and old reactionists, from executioners and victims, from Mario Pagano and from Cardinal Ruffo, from Caracciolo and from Nelson. One was from the Abbate Metastatio to a Neapolitan lady, and it was impossible to guess how that letter came to be found among these papers; for the lady, whose beautiful head had fallen in the same market-place where Conradin's had fallen, had no connection with the family of Altavilla.

"Autographs purchased for a collection!" said Renato to himself, as if he would fain render a tacit homage to his grandmother's unsuspecting trust.

At the same time his heart protested against this interpretation; he felt that this Vito Schisano must have been a double-dyed villain. Did they not accuse him of having worked with a will to bring about the restoration of the Bourbons? Did not the papers in possession of Margherita's father prove him to be a zealous sleuth-hound of the reactionary policy? Had he not persecuted and hunted General Corrado Altavilla, the brother of his master and son-in-law, like a wild beast? And the names of Filangieri, of Colletta, of Rossetti, and other generous patriots of 1820, whose signatures Renato could see at the end of

several letters, all of political import—did they not strengthen the suspicion that the origin of this collection was not an innocent mania for collecting autographs?

The Duke of Melito put the letters aside, and took up some other bundles of papers. They were deeds of purchase and sale, receipts, and then, again, private letters, but older than the others. There was even a genealogical tree, intended to prove the nobility of the Schisano family. The worthy Signor Vito had some family pride, but his researches had not been very successful, for the obscure names of his ancestors could only be traced by patient research and the help of baptismal registers up to the year 1600; but between the first of these ancestors and a Ghirardo Schisano, who had conquered a barony while fighting among the followers of Robert San Severino, there was an ominous blank. Notwithstanding all his efforts, Signor Vito had not been able to trace the connection with that family, and his genealogy had been left unfinished, suspended fluttering in the air like a broken spider's web.

Renato began to despair of the result. The old princess went on with her reading, from time to time giving a timid glance at the papers as they passed through her grandson's hands.

Two-thirds of the papers in the cabinet had already been examined. He then formed a heroic resolution. He took up a whole armful of papers, threw them on the little table close to the lamp; and then, instead of going regularly through them, he determined he would begin at the other end, with the lowest stratum

consisting of a larger bundle than any of the others.

Renato, as he was undoing the fastening of this packet, observed that the paper was less yellow and the ink less faded than many of the others. This was an unmistakable sign of a later date. In his impatience he paid no attention to an endorsement on the cover. The contents were the important thing, and not the title.

Imagine how his heart beat when on the outside of the papers he read these very words: "Last will and testament of the Eccellentissimo Don Federigo——" He paused for a moment and rubbed his eyes, fearing they had deceived him; then he looked again and finished the sentence: "Don Federigo Altavilla, Prince of Caivano, drawn up by me, the aforesaid Biagio Turchiarulo, at Melito, January 5th, 1805." He then gave a shout, greater than Archimedes' could have been.

"Here it is!" he exclaimed, in a tone of triumph.

"What is it?" asked the old princess, with a shudder.

"The will of your father-in-law, my mother—of Don Federigo Altavilla. Look! This is the signature of Biagio Turchiarulo, the Melito notary."

So saying, he laid the momentous document before his grandmother. The princess drew back with an involuntary gesture of terror. The sight of it froze the blood in her veins.

Renato guessed the agony she was suffering, and with some loving words he tried to soothe her. But the poor old lady made him a sign with her hand to be silent.

"Read, Renato, since you must," she muttered, after a moment's pause. "May God have mercy on us!"

Renato respected this silent grief; he kissed his grandmother's hand, and, returning to his task, set about reading with all the attention at his command, after such a sudden surprise, what had been written by the notary, Biagio Turchiarulo.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PROSE OF BIAGIO TURCHIARULO.

IT was indeed Don Federigo's will, duly signed and attested, that Renato had at last discovered. We need not here enumerate its provisions, as they have been indicated with sufficient clearness in the earlier pages of our story. As for poor Renato, who had made such exertions to recover this document, he was thunderstruck; the fictitious eagerness which he felt at first, as he gave a rapid glance at the pages, had quickly evaporated, and the accusing document, for which but an hour earlier he would have given the half of his blood, now burnt his fingers. And it was certainly a terrible trial to his feelings as a gentleman and as a son. To conceal the document was impossible, without loss of honour; publish it he could not, without disgracing his family.

Meantime a sarcastic voice kept whispering in his ear: "It was your own wish; what have you to complain of? Would it not have been better to have kept quiet and let destiny do its work? Would you

have come to this pass had you not persisted in taking the part of executioner, for which you will receive no thanks, and only bring dishonour on your own name."

The illusion was perfect; he really seemed to hear this horrible voice in his ear. He shook his head as if he would fain be rid of this troublesome counsellor, which, from temptation to temptation, might have led him to commit some villainy. He then took a look at his grandmother. The old princess had put down her book on the table, and with folded arms, her head resting against the back of the sofa, and her eyes half closed, she might have seemed to be falling asleep if a convulsive movement in her limbs and the continual motion of her lips, had not revealed plainly that she was suffering and praying. Renato approached her gently and took her hand.

"Mother dear," he said, "do you wish to read these papers?"

Donna Anna moved a little, and opened her eyes, but to avert them immediately from the infamous document at which Renato was pointing.

"Why should I?" she murmured, "if it is the document you were looking for; you have seen it, and that is enough."

"More than enough," he replied, with a sigh. "Ah, that I had never been born! Because, you see, dear mother, we must make up our minds to do something, and whatever it may be——"

Renato stopped, fearing he had said too much.

The old lady raised her eyes to heaven with a look of the greatest anguish.

"Whatever it may be," continued she, "it will

be a painful expiation. But what can we do? What *can* we do? Tell me, Renato, and may the Lord give you wisdom!"

"You were praying just now," stammered Renato. "Can you not advise?"

"No," she replied, meekly, "I cannot; I, who should have thought first—should have guessed, remembered—because, you know, a little while ago there was some talk about the disappearance of this will. But, Holy Virgin, was it possible that I—should ever suspect——"

"Grandmother dearest, come, calm yourself. I beg and entreat. You must," he continued, with gentle persistence. "You mustn't concern yourself about these things; it is my business to see what should be done. Come, let us look at it from every point of view, as far as needful. Must I take this will and put it back in its place there?"

"No, never!" exclaimed the princess, in a terrified tone. "It has been too long in there already!"

"Oh, thank you, grandmother," he said, throwing himself on his knees. "You are our guardian angel, and your goodness covers all the errors of our forefathers."

"Error!" she said, covering her face at this compassionate expression of Renato's.

"Yes, error," he repeated, moved to euphemism by his dutiful feelings. "Who can say that the will of Federigo Altavilla was stolen? Where are the witnesses? A doubt, a suspicion; carelessly uttered, excusable only in a person who had good cause to regret its disappearance. But can we judge and

condemn on a mere suspicion? I don't think so, and my conscience would revolt against any one who required me to do it. But it would be infamous, yes, downright infamous, if we, now that the document has been found, should think of hiding it any longer. And you, who declared at once, without hesitation or consideration, that the will should not be hidden away again, did you not feel in your innermost heart that your father was innocent?"

"God knows, I must believe it!" exclaimed the old lady, struck, though not exactly convinced, by her grandson's reasoning. "However it may be, you have the blessing of your poor grandmother—your other mother! And now," she added, drying her tears, "put back all these papers in the cabinet, except this one, which must never be put there again."

"And what am I to do with it?"

"Whatever you like. Was it not God's doing that you found it? He will show you what to do."

"Yes, mother dear," cried Renato in a tone of sudden excitement, "and through your mouth. I will go to Signor Ruggero Altavilla with this document in my hand, and I will say to him, 'Cousin, our good name and honour are in your hands. Yesterday we were the victors; to-day we are the vanquished. But you must admit that it is of our own choosing. Not for nothing is there a "Digne" in the Altavilla motto. Your enemies we have been; you may still consider us such, if you choose. But that we are gentlemen you cannot deny, since, having found among our papers a document like this, mislaid for upwards of

seventy years, a document which some people in our circumstances would not hesitate to destroy, we come to you, our bitter foe, and hand over to you the weapon with which you can strike us.' "

"Noble boy!" exclaimed Donna Anna, looking at him most affectionately.

"No, dear mother," he replied, shaking his head sadly, "it is not nobleness alone that I feel just now, or, at least any one might reasonably doubt it. Do I not know that Margherita will never hear of such a sacrifice? I can't swear for Signor Ruggero, though I consider him to be a gentleman. He is hardened in hatred to us, a hatred we can understand however, when we remember all his family has suffered from ours. But she, Margherita, is an angel like you, and we shall find her always in the midst of the combatants with an olive branch and balm for our wounds. If I were not certain of this, how could I have recourse to such a serious expedient without even consulting my father? You will see, dearest grandmother, all will be arranged quietly, and friends to plead our cause will not be wanting. To my father and to Margherita's, Signor Garantini, a kind and sensible man, will explain how things are. After all, why should we despair of a happy *dénoûment*, now that everything is conspiring in our favour, now that Speranza Zuniga has reconciled me with Corrado Altavilla, Ruggero's son and Margherita's brother."

"Speranza Zuniga," repeated the old lady. "Who is she?"

"Ah, true, I haven't told you yet of that other episode."

And with these words, Renato proceeded to tell his grandmother all that he had just heard about the doings of Sarah Temple, or, to give her her true name, Speranza Zuniga.

As Renato was speaking, he broke short with a sudden, "Ah! what is that?" just as he was expressing his determination to see his father on the morrow—"his father who he was sure would act as a gentleman should."

This exclamation, followed by one from the princess, was occasioned by the unexpected sound of the door being opened. The eyes of grandson and grandmother were turned in that direction at once.

The velvet *portière* was raised, and Don Federigo appeared, dark, severe, and frowning like a figure of Destiny.

"He has heard us!" said Donna Anna to herself.

It was true, he had heard their conversation, but not from the beginning. Returning to the Palazzo, a few minutes before, he had asked the porter for Don Renato.

Our readers know that Renato's rooms were on the first floor, with a separate staircase leading from the hall.

"He is not yet in his rooms," replied the porter; "since he went out with the princess, he hasn't come down again."

Don Federigo mounted the stairs, and asked another servant the same question.

"The Signor Duca is still with the princess," the servant had replied.

This interview with Donna Anna seemed strange to

the prince, as the request for an interview with himself for the following day had seemed strange too. A suspicion, a vague presentiment dawned in Don Federigo's mind. After reaching his own rooms, and dismissing his valet, he proceeded slowly towards the sitting-room which divided his apartments from his mother's. The door was not thick; the night was quiet; he listened, and heard the latter part of the conversation. They were plotting against his authority; they were making plans independently of him. Don Federigo could not contain himself any longer, and walked in on them, as already narrated.

"Don't disturb yourself, Don Renato," he said, advancing slowly. "To-morrow I have more to do than to listen to your falsehoods."

"Father!" exclaimed Renato, in consternation. "When you have heard all——"

"I know enough to demand an explanation from that cheat Temple, and his worthy colleague, Edward Mapleson. Some one must answer for this insult to me, so indulgently judged by my son, backed by his grandmother."

Renato grew pale. His father's tone overwhelmed him, and the poor boy felt no courage to reply; but happily the princess was there, and she had the courage wanting in her grandson.

"You should add, Don Federigo," she said, "that you learnt this by listening at doors."

"Mother!" cried the prince, touched to the quick by her speech, more impressive from its brevity.

"Yes, you may well be ashamed, Don Federigo," continued the old lady. "What you have done is

unworthy of a gentleman. I should not speak to you like this, I know, before your son; but in this case, too much delicacy is useless; and when children are able in their consciences to judge of their father's doings, of what good would my silence be? You are a son yourself; accept the reproof from one who can still, for a little, give a reproof. Do you think the reproach which you have made justified? Here, in your mother's room, no plots are hatched; sometimes the mistakes made by others are rectified, and expiation is made for their faults."

The Prince of Caivano looked at his mother in mute surprise. His words died on his lips.

"Yes," continued Donna Anna, "it is right that we should judge the living severely, when we are obliged to consider and to remedy the faults of the dead. I expect you, Don Federigo, to have some command over yourself and your pride, such as a poor old woman just now found necessary when the memory of her father was concerned. We have much to make amends for, believe me; and it is in making these sacrifices, that we shall show ourselves worthy of the name of Altavilla, and capable of a degree of rectitude without which the motto on our coat-of-arms would be a falsehood, and our ducal coronet a foolish vanity."

These spirited words brought back Renato's courage. He seized the will as it lay open on the table; turned over some pages with feverish haste, and having found the passage he was in search of, he laid it under his grandmother's eyes.

"How true your words are!" he cried, excitedly.

"They come to you from the tomb, these excellent maxims! Look! 'To behave honourably, by so doing, following the example of their forefathers—certain that their birth will be a sufficient reason.' These are the words of old Don Federigo, and three generations of Altavillas are listening to his words. Father," added Renato, turning to the prince, "don't consider me undutiful, I entreat. It was your daily example and teaching that gave me courage to recall the words of my great-grandfather."

"What is this?" demanded the prince, paying little attention to what his son was saying, and a great deal to that mysterious paper, whose authority Renato had been invoking.

"Father, it is Don Federigo's will, the existence of which was denied by us, and which, at last, I have found."

The prince did not take, he snatched the papers from the hands of his son, and hastened to examine them close to the lamp. He then perceived the date, gave a rapid glance at the first pages, and then broke off to take a look at the end. There could be no doubt of it: this was his grandfather's will. He gave a bewildered look at his mother and his son; a cold perspiration broke out on his forehead; on his colourless face might be seen the traces of the violent shock which he had just received.

If some one had to come to announce him suddenly, as to the Prince of Idumea: "All is lost, nothing is left, neither house, family, property, nor honour," he could not have felt more thunderstruck than he did after looking at this fatal will.

Finally, as soon as he could speak, he gave a cry, hollow and deep like the roar of a wild beast.

"How did this document come to be here?" he inquired, in a voice choking with anger.

"It was there, in that cabinet, forgotten among those papers," replied Donna Anna, in some confusion.

"Among those papers!" exclaimed Don Federigo. "Vito Schisano's papers?"

The old lady said nothing; but the colour that mounted into her cheeks was a sufficient reply.

Renato came nearer to his father, and with downcast eyes said in a low voice—

"Father, she is in trouble; remember that she is Vito Schisano's daughter."

Don Federigo gave his son an angry look, and then stopped himself. He took the hint.

"Forgive me a useless and unreasonable question," he said, turning towards his mother. "But now, and that is the worst part of it, these wretches have beaten us."

"Wretches!" repeated the old lady. "And why? What right have we to judge them in that way? I hoped better things of you, Don Federigo. I hoped that, considering what these two poor hearts have suffered, you might listen to the entreaties of your mother; if she really have still some influence over you, that you might have gone——"

"Where? Let me hear!" cried the prince, seeing that Donna Anna had not courage to finish her sentence.

"To the house of Don Ruggero Altavilla," said his

mother, then making a courageous effort, "to propose for Margherita in the name of your son."

Don Federigo raised his head like a serpent trodden on by an incautious passer-by.

"I?" he hissed, in a fury. "Never! Do you hear me? Never!"

"Never! Don Federigo, that is a horrid word, and tardy repentance is a costly thing."

"Think what it is you are asking for now," he broke forth, after listening to his mother's quiet reply. "My disgrace! The dishonour of the whole family! And it is my mother, Don Ruggero's widow, who advises such a step?"

"Your mother, Don Ruggero's widow, and the daughter of Vito Schisano," replied Donna Anna, speaking with slow and solemn emphasis, "and her sacrifice is greater and more painful than yours."

"How? Tell me, in God's name, what have you to do with it?"

"I am bearing the punishment of other people's transgressions," replied the princess, looking down. "It is a bitter cup, believe me; and would that I could also say: 'Take this from me.' However, justice before everything; I am not an Altavilla by birth, but nevertheless, and perhaps for that reason, I see and feel what it means. Renato," she added, "take this will; do you be arbiter; whatever you may do with it, you have your grandmother's blessing; her days are numbered, but she will die with a quiet mind, thinking of you, and of your noble character."

Don Federigo was silenced. This rivalry in magnanimity between his mother and his son, a rivalry

whose importance he could not overlook, impressed him greatly.

"Wait!" he cried, as if the transference of the will from his mother's hands into Renato's signified his own condemnation. "The name of Altavilla, you say? I know, my mother, what is required of it; it is a name illustrated by thirty generations of gentlemen, and I am glad" (glad! when he was quivering with rage), "I am glad to see it is remembered by those present. But, thank God!" he continued, getting more and more excited; "the inheritor of this name, and its legitimate representative is myself; neither mother nor son shall usurp my rights while I am alive. Give *me* the will; it came here by mistake; it belongs to me, to me alone."

Renato, who had already taken the papers from his grandmother, bowed acquiescence, and handed his father the will.

Don Federigo looked at his son, as if he would like to tear him in pieces; he squeezed the papers in his fingers, as if he would fain demolish them. Renato had turned pale, and was trembling internally but not from fear. He could not help condemning his father at this solemn juncture; but a feeling of pity and consternation filled his heart.

At last the prince began again addressing Renato, all the time fidgeting with the papers in his trembling hand.

"Do you know what the duty of an Altavilla is?" he said, with a ferocious look.

"No, father," replied Renato, looking down. "While you are here, that is enough."

"Thank you!" replied the prince, in a sarcastic tone. "But I will tell you, proud as you are; and learn," he continued, gravely, "for some day you will be the inheritor of this great name. The duty of an Altavilla is not to ask a rich girl in marriage when people are poor, like you and me."

"Oh, father!" cried Renato, who felt the full force of these words; and he threw himself in tears at his father's feet.

"Leave me now," continued Don Federigo, pushing him angrily away. "I will do my duty."

The old princess said nothing, asked her son no questions; she too understood that the settling of everything must be left to him.

The Prince of Caivano had already taken a step towards the door; he then turned, and approaching his mother without a word, almost without looking at her, he imprinted a kiss on her brow, still beautiful and youthful-looking, more beautiful still from its expression, under the illumination of a martyr's halo.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TURNING THE TABLES.

IT was a morning in December; but not for this reason was it cold and foggy, for the scene of our story lies in Naples. All the cities on the Tyrrhenian sea enjoy the enviable privilege of many autumnal days scattered through the winter, in the same way as the spring flowers are scattered about the country by those wasteful spendthrifts, the almond and peach trees. The learned, investigating the cause of this phenomenon, will tell you that it is all owing to the Gulf Stream breaking the regularity of the isothermal lines. But on these subjects we need not speculate here.

The plane trees in the garden under Ruggero Altavilla's windows had lost their foliage, but the broad shining leaves of the oleanders had not yet fallen, the agave still shot up its tall crimson juicy spikes, the palms were swaying gently in the sunshine, and the tamarisk hung in verdant masses from the

walls. We are not to imagine that this garden was Signor Ruggero's property; it was close to, but not belonging to, his house. Moreover, the old painter lived on the third storey next the roof, and, curiously enough, that third storey seemed like a ground floor to him, almost like a hole to any one looking at the hill above him and all the higher houses, cottages, and terraces round him.

Ruggero Altavilla's lodgings consisted of three rooms and a kitchen. The kitchen was windowless, with no opening to it except the chimney; and the rooms might be compared to matchboxes, they were so small. The entrance was through a small court-yard, a would-be garden which could not even pretend to the dignity of a terrace. The reader will understand that it was a strip of ground too small or too steep for a room, and therefore left open to serve as entrance. A vine in one corner, two little orange trees, four bits of parsley in a bed, a caper-plant growing in the wall, and the little court was full. To make amends, one could see the real garden, over the wall, spreading out below; and beyond it, between the tops of houses, and over the sloping terraces, there was the view of Naples and its wonderful bay.

Let us now enter Signor Ruggero's abode. It is small, but this fact is less perceptible, owing to the lack of furniture. The first room, which serves as hall, sitting-room, studio, and dining-room, contains only a table, an easel, and a few seats. If five persons happened to be present one would have had to stand, as those four chairs reign alone in all the rooms, just tolerating the presence of a stool in the

next room, which is Margherita's. In this room there is also a bed, a large chest, and a small looking-glass. In the adjoining room, Signor Ruggero's, nothing is visible except the bed.

But if poverty was apparent in the Altavillas' new dwelling, there was at least one feature which, at first sight, would seem to be out of keeping with this fact. Pictures were there in abundance, quite as close on the walls as in the Museo Nazionale. My readers have already guessed that the picture gallery consisted of all the unsold works of Ruggero Altavilla, a painter of the old school, who unfortunately was guilty of bad colouring and of too great mannerism, but who always showed too much respect to nature to represent her as all spinach and broomsticks.

And now for the inhabitants. The background having been put in lightly, let us draw the figures. The old man was seated near the window before his easel, and for the hundredth time was painting a view of the monastery of San Martino, formerly a favourite subject with travellers, who were willing to spend, and who liked to take away with them some memento of Naples. You can imagine what it was like, a row of pillars with the light falling sideways, suggesting a courtyard; in the background a spare and melancholy-looking friar coming along with his head down, perhaps thinking of the misery of this poor old world, but more probably of his own.

This friar bore a strong family likeness to the artist—he, too, prematurely old and melancholy looking. Not that he complained of his fortune, which latterly had seemed inclined to leave off persecuting him;

but no doubt all the trouble and anxiety of the year just passed had left deep traces on the brow of Ruggero Altavilla. Besides, he was vexed by the constant though silent grief of Margherita, too proud to complain, too sensitive and too constant in her affections to forget the past. Sad and stern, such was Margherita, like a marble statue, with her invariable demeanour of silent sadness; one might almost say that she was petrified with grief. But she was still wonderfully beautiful, and in this mournful state she seemed more beautiful than ever. She was dressed in black; and, in fact, was she not in mourning for her lost love? But in all her appearance there was no affectation nor display; she never alluded in any way to her hidden sorrows: no tears betrayed her, no sighs revealed her secret to lookers-on.

Margherita, close to the door, was busy over some needlework; less silent than usual, because she was not alone with her father, and before others, though relations, her melancholy might have seemed uncourteous. Let us reveal at once who those others were, or rather that person was—for there was only one, and of the gentle sex. It was Speranza Zuniga sitting close to Margherita. She, too, sewing away, though one could see at a glance that she was not meant for this kind of work. Speranza was dressed in black, but her dress was all flounces and furbelows, in the latest fashion; it must have cost twenty times as much as the one her cousin was wearing, and this elaborate dress corresponded with a magnificent black lace mantilla, which she

had just taken off and deposited on the quilt of Margherita's bed, the only place for it in a house so bare of furniture.

Speranza Zuniga came almost every day, and showed her affection for Margherita by spending a few hours working with her.

"You won't come to me and enjoy that delightful *dolce far niente* as I do," she had declared; "so you must let me come to you and do as you do."

Ruggero and Margherita had lost none of their pride with their poverty, and Speranza Zuniga, with Spanish blood in her veins, could understand and respect it, while she prudently tried to turn the position, too strong to be attacked in front. Her invitations were warm and constant; any others would have surrendered, especially when these offers were made by excellent and beloved relations. But even here, Signor Ruggero felt that the relationship had been too long ignored to allow of any common purse, and it was impossible to make him change his mind.

"You see, people are not dukes and princes for nothing," Don José had remarked to his pretty niece. "I admire Don Ruggero, and I am crazy about Donna Margherita. Oh if I were only thirty years younger!"

"You horrible uncle, would you betray me with a smiling countenance?"

"Of course! Are you not ready to betray me, and leave me there all by myself?"

"Betray you, yes," replied Speranza, keeping up the joke. "But leave you, not at all! Never fear; I am too fond of America."

"That is a comforting announcement, and I am grateful—to America."

That day, Don José, after escorting his niece to Petraio, had descended again to go to visit the Museo Nazionale in company with Corrado. Don José, for the last month, had taken a regular daily dose of art and archæology. But this could not go on. People are human, after all, only human!

"Once in a way, I don't object," cried Don José, lamenting comically his hard fate; "but every day museums, picture galleries, Roman houses, ruins of pagan temples, amphitheatres, buried cities, mosaics, Vesuvius, Virgil's tombs, Sybil's caves, lakes of Avernus—enough to make one swear, upon my word! Beautiful Italy! if you were only at the bottom of a gold mine, or a coal mine, or even a petroleum well!"

Speranza was shocked at these speeches of her uncle's. She, too, was very fond of America, and particularly of Peru. Who is not fond of his native land? But she, though determined to cross the Atlantic again, had a great eye for what was beautiful, and did justice to all those wonders of nature and art which filled Don José with despair, and held that gold, however beautiful when coined, and coals, however useful for furnaces, too often spoil the look of the country they are in, and the character of the people who have to penetrate in search of them into the bowels of the earth; while no one can say, much less prove, that a beautiful statue, or a beautiful picture, or a famous ruin, have ever done harm to any one.

"The dear fellow!" said Signor Ruggero, between one stroke of his brush and another, just as we resume the thread of this true story. "Yesterday, at last, he came here in a better humour."

"I should think so!" exclaimed Speranza.

"What has happened to him then?" asked Margherita, who felt all Corrado's joys and sorrows as if they were her own.

"What has happened," replied Speranza, "is that yesterday he came to know and to love some person whom he never knew or cared for before."

Margherita raised her eyes from her work to look at her cousin. Speranza, on her part, discreetly looked down.

"Let us talk of something else," she said. "I can't explain this mystery to-day, unless something unforeseen happens. Will you come and dine with me?"

"Cousin, you know that's impossible," replied Signor Ruggero. "To be fit for your company—at least, to pay you proper respect before the servants, we should be properly dressed; and that," added the old man, with a melancholy smile, "is rather difficult. Don't you see?"

Speranza nodded assent to these objections, admitting of no reply.

"There's one thing we can do," continued Signor Ruggero. "Do you dine here."

"No," said Speranza. "You would be buying things for me; I won't stay."

"How horrid of you, cousin!"

"Yes, of course I am horrid; and to be candid, I

want to be horrid with you. Oh, what do I mean? Am I always to suffer from your pride, Cousin Ruggero? Yes, I must say it, your pride! I have been here a month; for a month I have been offering you my services; I am your dearest relation, as you are my dearest; I am rich, enormously rich, and that is no fault of mine; we could all be happy together. But no, my cousin's pride comes in, and I must bow my head, and suffer from your constant refusals. Constant is not the right word, I should say obstinate, because you know you are in the wrong; I don't deserve these repulses from you. I am in King Midas' case, my dear cousin," proceeded Speranza, seeing that Don Ruggero was in no hurry to reply. "You know this king—do you know how I am like him?"

"I know that he was a very rich King of Phrygia, and Bacchus gave him power to turn everything he touched into gold."

"Exactly; and he had soon reason to regret this privilege, as he could neither eat nor drink—his bread and wine all turned into gold. What is the good of money if we can't do what we like with it? My money is a curse to me if you won't accept anything from my friendship."

"The comparison is a little far-fetched, cousin," remarked Margherita, trying to turn the conversation.

"Yes, for I am just the opposite to Midas," replied Speranza; "I have the gold, and nobody wants it. And that's what annoys me."

"But, good God, you needn't be annoyed!" exclaimed old Altavilla, trying to soothe her. "Has

not your coming already brought me good luck? It is just a month since I began to sell my pictures again. Let time do its work; the fashion comes back, and I shall come round, slowly, certainly; but all the more satisfactorily, as the improvement in my circumstances will be the result of my own work."

"Yes, yes; if you choose," replied Speranza; "but take care, either you will have to come down the hill, or I sha'n't come to see you; and then I shall be miserable by your fault."

"Speranza!" said Margherita, in a tone of gentle reproof. "You would punish us too hardly for a feeling of delicacy, which, after all, should be no offence."

"Honey-lipped, my dearest," retorted Speranza, "your soft words have no effect on me. It is insulting. From the way you refuse it one would suppose the Zunigas had stolen their money."

At these words, in a slightly angry tone, Signor Ruggero left off painting, and came over to Speranza.

"No, my dear cousin," he replied, gently; "it is because the Altavillas don't like to take money they haven't earned. Why should you not allow me a little pride, the last remnant of our grandeur? Moreover, my dear child," added the old man, stroking Speranza's black hair affectionately, "lest you should think us more proud than we need be, do you know, that from the first day I saw you, I wished——. Can you guess what my wish was, Cousin Speranza?"

She blushed as red as a rose.

"Ah, if it were so!" she exclaimed, with a sigh.

"But your son thinks differently, Signor Ruggero; he is still fond of——"

"Do you think so?" interrupted Margherita, with an incredulous look.

"I do; and what do you think? You never deceive one, Margherita."

"I know," replied Margherita, "that he couldn't, and he oughtn't, to marry any one who looks down on us."

"That is a very proper maxim," said Speranza; "but deeds and words don't always correspond. You yourself, are you not still fond of—a certain person?"

It was Margherita's turn to blush now; but recovering herself quickly, she replied with dignity—

"The Duke of Melito does not look down on me; he never has looked down on me. I forgive his family all the wrong they have done me; as for him, I will love him till the day of my death."

With these words she bent over her work, and tried to go on with her sewing. Signor Ruggero muttered something unintelligible (perhaps he hardly knew himself what he was saying), and hastily dried his eyes.

"You are quite right," her cousin was saying in the meantime. "I know the duke, and I believe he is worthy of your confidence."

"Have you——" stammered Margherita, in great confusion.

"Seen him? Certainly, and talked to him for a long time. But that's enough," added Speranza, trying, under cover of a joke, to hide how anxious she was to turn the conversation: "when you won't have a share of my riches, you won't have any confi-

dences from me. Naughty cousins! Just wait a little. Lest Corrado should follow your example, I have persuaded my Uncle Moreno to promote him to the important post of his secretary. But might I not do worse, worse than that, I say?"

"Don't excite yourself, cousin, don't excite yourself!" said Ruggero Altavilla, anxious also to change the conversation. "We will come and dine with you to-day."

"Ah, that is better! Just what I wanted! Thank you! thank you!"

With these words she jumped up, and threw her arms round his neck. Margherita's turn came next, and here the embrace was longer, and the kisses more resounding than ever.

Just at that moment there was a gentle knock at the door of the house.

"Let us fly!" cried Speranza, moving quickly towards the next room.

"And why, pray?" asked Margherita.

"Let us fly, I say; I will tell you the reason afterwards. Signor Ruggero, I would go and open the door myself, but I can't——"

"Why should you? You are the youngest, certainly; but you don't belong to the family at all. And I don't understand this flight, or rather I can guess," added the old man, smiling. "You don't like any one to see you here, in the midst of our poverty, my pretty cousin."

"How horrid of you! To prove that it isn't true, I shall stay. And what's more, I shall go and open the door."

And before the old gentleman could remonstrate or stop her, Speranza had darted into the little court. As she ran, however, she reflected on the serious state of things.

"What shall I say to him?" she said to herself. "My appearance will have the effect on him of Medusa's head, will it not? Though my locks are not quite so tangled as hers."

Speranza had some reason to expect an arrival. A letter, received that morning in the hotel, had set her mind at ease on this point. Therefore, what was her astonishment, when she opened the door, to see a face quite different from the one she expected? Just at first she wasn't sorry, because she had not yet quite made up her mind as to what answer she should give; but as she was anxious to receive this visitor, the sight of any one else seemed an ill-omen.

This "very different" gentleman was a well-dressed, a very well-dressed person, with an extremely vulgar countenance.

"I beg your pardon, Signora," he said, touching his hat. "Perhaps I have mistaken the number. I was looking for——"

"Tell me who you were looking for, and then I shall know whether you have made a mistake or not," replied the girl, who had already taken a dislike to the individual, without exactly knowing why.

"I was looking," said the other, "for a Signor Ruggero——"

"Prince Ruggero Altavilla?" replied Speranza. "He lives here."

"The prince," repeated the other, mechanically.

"A prince indeed!" he went on muttering; "but after all, if the title belongs him, he is perfectly right to use it."

In the meantime, the new-comer was standing in a state of indecision; hat in hand, at the risk of catching cold. The sight of this lady so elaborately dressed, with such decided manners, and speaking with a foreign accent, had quite put him out.

"Come in," continued Speranza. "What name shall I say?"

"Oh, don't trouble yourself, please. I am an old friend of Signor Ruggero's; a friend whom he hasn't seen for some time, who regrets having been so long without coming near him——"

"Your name?" interrupted the girl, with an impatient gesture.

"Martino Cavaliere Martino Palmanova," he replied, in hopes of making a favourable impression on the stranger.

The girl started on hearing this name, and bit her lip to keep back an exclamation. She gave a side-long glance at the father of her fair rival, and felt inclined to send him about his business without regarding the consequences. But immediately she felt ashamed of her sudden anger, and quietly motioned him to come in.

Signor Palmanova, the first Cavaliere of the family of Palmanova di Vascio Puorto (Basso Porto, the lowest quarter in Naples), did not detect a foe in the look of this stranger; and in much confusion proceeded towards Signor Ruggero's rooms, without regarding that Speranza was behind him.

"Signor Ruggero," he said, stopping modestly at the threshold.

The old gentleman, on his way towards the door, retreated a little at the sight of Palmanova, and looked at him in amazement.

"Father!" said Margherita, as she passed him, giving him a look of entreaty.

Signor Ruggero nodded in reply to his daughter; and recovering himself, offered a seat to his visitor.

"Sit down, Signor Martino; you must be tired," he said.

"Yes, yes," replied Palmanova, snatching at this plank. "Your dwelling is high, my good friend! But no matter; if I had known where you lived sooner, I should have run, flown; because, you see——"

And he gasped for breath, not knowing what to say, the worthy Cavaliere Palmanova. In the meantime, Speranza passed behind his back, into Margherita's room.

"Because, in short, I have behaved badly towards you," said Signor Martino, finding the words he wanted.

"In what way?" exclaimed Signor Ruggero, shrugging his shoulders. "Not in any way, that I am aware of. We are poor, and you are rich, Signor Martino; let the poor keep to the poor, and let every one mind his own business."

"What, Signor Ruggero? You poor? I rich? Indeed, it never occurred to me to think of the difference. I, whatever people may say to you to the contrary, I have always been your sincere friend;

and what I want to settle with you, dear Signor Ruggero—I wish you to understand its importance," added the helpless orator, interrupting himself. "You see, I have been unfortunate, and——"

"In business, perhaps?" asked the old gentleman, interrupting him, to help him out of his difficulty.

"Oh no, thank God; on the contrary, I may say, my affairs never were so prosperous as they are now."

"Allow me to congratulate you," replied Signor Ruggero, going back to his easel, and giving a few strokes to his Cloisters of San Martino.

"Thank you. You are too kind," said Signor Martino, who seemed unable to come to the point; and instead of telling on what business he had made this visit, Cavaliere Palmanova floundered more and more.

"I have come——"

"To tell me that we are still friends? All right," replied the artist; "let me thank you, and no more need be said about it."

And emphasizing his words with a shrug of his shoulders, Signor Ruggero turned entirely towards his painting. Signor Martino began to lose all hope of making himself understood; and he sat, as mute as a fish, staring at the painting of his noble friend. But this could not go on; and Signor Martino tried to proceed with the conversation, introducing a different subject.

"Annunziata begged to be remembered to you," he said, after a pause of a few moments. "If I had been certain of finding your house at once, I should have brought her, as she begged me to do, to see

Signorina Margherita" (and so saying, he gave an imploring glance at the girl). "But she will come some other day, if you will allow her. We were so unlucky as to annoy you with a certain proposal; but I hope, at least, you don't bear us any malice."

Signor Ruggero did not deign to reply; he began to whistle a favourite air—a sign that his patience was nearly exhausted.

This Margherita perceived, and however unwillingly, she had to speak.

"No, Signor Palmanova," she said, with that dignified air already described; "your proposal did us great honour, and your daughter should have told you the real reasons which prevented our accepting it. I had no intentions of marrying."

"I always said you were an angel, Signorina," cried Palmanova, turning with delight towards Margherita, after the repulse of her father. "If any cloud has come to interfere with our friendship, I hope you will forget it, and allow us to go back to the old terms."

Signor Martino called the nice scene arranged by him and Signor Turiello Schisano at the Fiorentini, a cloud. The old hypocrite!

Margherita replied to this appeal with a nod, intended to cover the tumult of different feelings. But Signor Martino chose to understand this nod in a favourable sense.

"Ah, thank you!" he went on. "Annunziata will be so pleased. The poor child can't get on without you. I will bring her to-morrow, or this evening, if you like."

Don Ruggero began to understand the meaning and object of all this diplomacy.

"Is she not engaged to be married?" he then asked, in an indifferent tone, and without looking up from his painting.

"What! Annunziata engaged? Not at all. And who could have told you this?"

"Well," replied the old gentleman, "there was some prospect of it when we left—your neighbourhood."

"Ah, yes; often enough," replied Palmanova, trying to smooth matters. "Among others, there was that Signor Pietro, the son of my correspondent in Genoa. But then, a boy of no experience. Such a match for my Annunziata! However, you see, Signor Ruggero, we have a little money, and every one runs after that."

"Really? And he wasn't rich, this gentleman? You seemed greatly pleased with him."

"Of course; after all I had heard of him. But soon, I knew better. It was not a very safe house, and the first shake of an earthquake——"

"Brought it down, I suppose?"

"Well, nearly so. Happily, I was out of it in time. I had smelt the pinchbeck, so I had, under the golden outside."

"A clever man," exclaimed Signor Ruggero, to the great astonishment of his daughter, who had never seen him so talkative. "And then you broke off the match?"

"But I tell you, there never was any. My daughter is not to be had by the first-comer, even though he were a millionaire. *A propos*, Signor Ruggero,"

continued Signor Martino, taken in by the unexpected friendliness of the old gentleman; "we might talk over a certain matter. My daughter has confided something to me. Dear child! if she had only spoken to me sooner!"

"What are you talking about now? And what have I to do with it?"

"Oh, you have much to do with it, and with as good a right as I. Your Corrado, dear boy, has returned from America?"

"Yes, he has returned," replied the old gentleman, drily.

"Ah, we should like so much to see him, my daughter and I! The dear boy!"

"Signor Martino, I warn you that he has come home as poor as he went away," replied Don Ruggero, looking with a sarcastic expression at his former friend. "People don't make fortunes in a year; and Corrado hasn't even brought pinchbeck."

"What of that? Must people always be rich?" exclaimed Signor Martino, quite unconscious of the sarcasm. "I am rich enough for two."

Don Ruggero fairly stopped painting, and turned his chair towards his visitor.

"Well, dear Signor Martino, would you like my opinion?" he said. "You are rich enough for two?"

"I am, I have told you so; and I don't go back from my words. I like Signor Corrado, and——"

"Become rich enough for four," replied Signor Ruggero, without giving him time to finish; "and don't bother me any longer."

Signor Martino turned all manner of colours.

"*Bueno, per Dios!*" cried a voice from the next room, which made Signor Palmanova turn round.

"Never mind, Signor Martino," said Ruggero, laughing; "it is an echo."

"An echo, in Spanish!"

"Of course! What! Are you surprised? The Spaniards have been in Naples so long, they may well have left some memories behind them. And, if you don't like the explanation, I can't help it. Signor Martino, I see you wish to go. Don't put yourself to any inconvenience for us."

Cavaliere Palmanova, livid with rage, stammered some unconnected words, and with Signor Ruggero's help, made his way to the door. But if he found his way into the street, it was not any thanks to his host. Fortunately, there was only one way from the Altavillas' house to the Petraio steps.

"Ah, the contemptuous wretches! The villains!" he kept muttering to himself. "To treat a person like me in that fashion! A Cavaliere Palmanova? As sure as I live, they shall smart for it. Ah, they shall pay for it dearly, upon my word! And that mocking daughter of his! How she must have enjoyed it with her false face! By the way, it must have been she who spoke Spanish. A nice hole for me to put my head into; blockhead that I am! But then, if that Turiello hadn't told me—oh, he will have to smart for it; first of all. I will write—I will write, and tell all his lies to the Prince of Caivano; and I will send him certain receipts, that he may confront him with them. To make me cut such a figure! me! a Cav——"

Panting and puffing in this manner, he tore down the steps like one demented. But we shall not follow him, my readers, or rather we shall go back to a purer air, and to pleasanter faces, for a little.

If Signor Martino Palmanova had not been so utterly beside himself, he might have noticed that some one passed him on his way to the house he had just left. And this sight would have astonished him even more than the echo in Spanish, that Signor Ruggero had been bantering about.

Speranza Zuniga had returned to the sitting-room, the recent theatre of this little scene, and was in the act of complimenting her elder cousin most sincerely. The slap in the face so unexpectedly given by Signor Ruggero to the mercenary merchant had filled the American girl with admiration.

"I could not help calling out," she said; "those words came from my very heart. You didn't mind, I hope?"

"I? Not at all."

"That is right. For my part, I am delighted I said them. Though," she added in a different tone, "I wish Corrado had been present, to see what impression his dearly-beloved father-in-law's proposal would have made on him."

"Father-in-law!" repeated Margherita, in a tone of affectionate reproof. "You must think that Corrado has neither head nor heart!"

Speranza's only reply was to shake her head, with a look partly angry, partly incredulous. Just at that moment, to help her out of her embarrassment, a knock at the front door was heard.

"Another of them!" exclaimed Signor Ruggero. "If he is like the last one, I will knock his head against that old wall."

"Surely this is the right man now," murmured Speranza.

Whereupon, while Signor Ruggero went to the door, she dragged Margherita with her into the next room.

"Come," she whispered. "I will tell you everything afterwards."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE END OF THE WILL.

THE gentleman who was going up towards Petraio as Signor Martino was coming down, the gentleman who shortly afterwards was knocking at the door of Ruggero Altavilla's humble abode, was no other than Don Federigo, Prince of Caivano. He it was, very grave and stern-looking, dressed in black from head to foot, as if he were going to a funeral.

A black-looking man! Don Federigo's countenance was as dark as any thunder-cloud. Otherwise, there were no signs of any disturbance, no appearance of hesitation in his movements; he was grave, and the effort he was making could be seen from the working of the muscles of his face; but his whole looks and bearing expressed great determination.

Ruggero Altavilla, having no servants at command, had gone in person to open the street door. He had never been in the company of his foe; perhaps twice he might have seen him at a distance, but many years had passed since then, perhaps twenty-five or

twenty-six. Notwithstanding, something in Don Federigo's general appearance made him recognize his relative, and he drew back a little, with an exclamation of surprise. On this, Don Federigo, who was just about to make the usual inquiry, in his turn recognized his cousin, whom he had never seen, not even as a boy.

They looked at one another for a moment. In Don Federigo's eyes there was a grave expression, free from any haughtiness; in Don Ruggero's, there was not the smallest trace of animosity. He had heard that an interview was inevitable; accordingly, with a cold but courteous gesture, he motioned the prince to come in.

"Don't take off your hat, pray," he then said, seeing that the prince took his off as they came into the little court.

"Thank you," replied Don Federigo with a bow, keeping his hat in his hand.

At the sitting-room door, Don Federigo made another bow, and walked in, followed by his host.

"To what do I owe the honour of this visit?" Signor Ruggero then asked.

"I felt it a duty," replied the Prince of Caivano, repressing a sigh.

The old gentleman gave him a look of interrogation, expressive of astonishment and diffidence.

"Take a seat, please," he then said, shrugging his shoulders like a man resigning himself to wait for the explanation of an enigma.

"Thank you," said Don Federigo, though without sitting down.

"First of all, I am speaking to Don Ruggero Altavilla, Prince——"

"Yes," interrupted the old gentleman out of the kindness of his heart, and wishing to spare his kinsman the recapitulation of his titles, a painful operation evidently. "And I, if I am not mistaken, have the honour of receiving the Prince of Caivano."

"Federigo Altavilla," said he, humbly; "it is I. And don't consider it strange if I request the presence of your son and daughter, to hear what I have to say."

Don Ruggero was extremely surprised; but immediately, with an effort, he replied—

"Corrado is not at home, but he will soon be here, as it must be two o'clock by this time."

"Half-past two," said the Prince of Caivano, looking at his watch, as useful to him at this moment as his handkerchief is to an embarrassed actor. "But your daughter Margherita will do, if she will be so kind."

Ruggero assented with a nod, and went towards the door of his daughter's room, to find her huddled in a corner in her cousin's arms.

"My dear," said her father, gravely, "the Prince of Caivano wishes you to be present at our interview."

Margherita trembled all over at this invitation, not by any means unexpected, for the house was small, and the Prince of Caivano, whose voice she knew, had spoken loud enough to be heard by her.

There was no time for deliberation, she must get up and make her appearance before Renato's father. She gave a look at her cousin, who pressed her hand as if to give her courage, and walked out of her room more dead than alive. The poor thing was still a

prey to the violent emotions caused by all that Speranza had hastily told her, or allowed her to guess, in the few minutes between their flight from the room and the arrival of the prince.

Don Federigo made a low bow at the sight of the divine creature, whom ten months before he had seen weeping at his feet, begging him to be reconciled to Ruggero Altavilla. And, as he bowed courteously to the pretty girl, his emotions were many and various.

But for all this emotion, the reader need not look for any sudden change of purpose in Don Federigo's mind. He was as far removed as ever from the idea of having Margherita as a daughter-in-law. The Prince of Caivano was much perturbed at that moment. He had made up his mind what to do in one respect, for the simple reason that he could not help it; but he was vacillating and confused as to everything else. For instance, he knew that his relations were worthy of esteem, and yet he felt as if he could not help hating them. He was accomplishing a duty, but with his patrician haughtiness. I know that it is not well to dispute over the direct causes of actions; and certainly, moralists will tell you that the motto "noblesse oblige," does not bear too close inspection.

"We are of old family," the prince had said, while fortifying himself for his great undertaking, as he was mounting his Golgotha, "and we must show that no sacrifice, however great it may appear, is too high for a family which has always deserved well of the throne and the altar in defence of the eternal truths which govern the world."

On Margherita's appearance Don Federigo resumed.

"Don Ruggero Altavilla," he said, after bowing to the young lady, "will you please let your daughter, Donna Margherita know, how highly I esteem her. If formerly I was wrong about a certain matter in dispute between us, I have had time to reconsider it, and to-day I have come to make amends, however painful I may find it to do so."

Margherita, who had already raised her lovely eyes, illuminated with a ray of hope, felt intensely disappointed at the prince's last words.

"Yes," he proceeded, "it is to you that I, Prince of Caivano, in my own name, and in the name of my family, have to confess a serious error into which we have fallen, in denying the will of Don Federigo Altavilla, my great-grandfather."

"Ah!" exclaimed Don Ruggero, who certainly was taken by surprise. "Then there was such a will as we maintained?"

"There was," replied Don Federigo, gravely. "I might have communicated this to you through my lawyer, but I thought it better to attend to this matter without delay. There has been too much prating about it already between lawyers, and an honourable name, which should be sacred to us all, has been dragged through the dirt."

"What do you mean?" cried Ruggero, bouncing up.

Margherita hastened to interpose.

"Please, dear father, please!" she said, kissing him. "The Prince of Caivano has expressed himself severely, but he speaks of a name of which we are all

equally proud. Let us hear him out; perhaps our justification will not be far to seek any more than his."

"Signorina," replied Don Federigo, after listening to her most attentively; "you encourage me with your noble words, the outcome of a noble heart. Tell him, tell your father, that in the Altavilla family there never were and there never could be thieves."

"No one ever said so, that I know of," she remarked.

"True," replied the prince; "but people may have thought it. And to prove that they were wrong I have come myself to tell you—the will, the existence of which was affirmed by you and denied by us, is forthcoming—it was in my house."

Signor Ruggero and his daughter could not restrain a cry of astonishment.

"Certainly," continued Don Federigo, "appearances are against us; but when you hear how that document came into our house, and how it came to remain there, your suspicions will vanish. Here is our grandfather's will. Look!"

As he spoke he opened his overcoat, and drew forth a packet of papers which he handed to Ruggero Altavilla. The latter immediately took the bundle, glanced at it, and then laid it on the table.

"You will ask me how it comes that I am only bringing these papers now," added the prince. "The circumstances are strange, certainly; but I trust that Donna Margherita at least will believe in our loyalty in this matter."

"Prince, my father can tell you," replied the girl,

interposing with much tact, "that he has never doubted it. Besides," she added, to clench the argument, "if our lawyer made allusion to the existence of the will, he expressed no suspicion that an Altavilla had had anything to do with its disappearance."

"That is true; and allow me to thank you," replied Don Federigo. "But you know, Signorina, how heavily the old dictum of Roman jurisconsults weighs in these cases, 'Is fecit cui prodest.' Who has profited by the disappearance of the will except our family? Appearances are against us then. And yet, I swear by the God who hears us, we were always ignorant of the existence of the deed, and certainly my father was ignorant of it when he married Annella Schisano, my excellent mother!"

"Angelic being!" exclaimed Margherita.

"Yes, you are right; an angelic being, in whose room last night, unknown to everybody, buried under a heap of old useless papers, this unlucky document was discovered that now burns our hands, and cannot remain with us another day. A thief there must have been," continued the Prince of Caivano, making a superhuman effort to bring out the words; "and this thief——"

"Stop, I beg and entreat!" interrupted Don Ruggero, who had remained silent till now. "Let us say nothing about the guilty in our house, which you must look on as yours," he added, with a dignity that made his hovel seem a palace. "It is a domestic scandal; let us hide it."

The prince's confusion was so great that he said nothing, and bent his eyes on the ground; yet he

could not help acknowledging to himself the magnanimity of his Cousin Ruggero.

"Thank you, too," he said then, recovering himself. "And now I am come to redress wrongs that were never committed by me. Up till to-day I have been great: do you be so now, since my grandfather's entail makes you master of the greater part of all that I have hitherto possessed."

Ruggero Altavilla was just about to answer when Speranza suddenly appeared at the door. The prince started back, like a person who certainly did not expect to see her there; but he soon recovered himself, and composed his face to its most ceremonious expression, which, accompanied by a smile, was intended to say—

"Signorina, I am happy to see you."

Speranza, who had no such expectations of him, was grateful for the good intention.

"This is really grand, Signor," she said, holding out her white hand to him in a friendly way. "You Altavillas are of quite a different stamp from other people; whether you are right or wrong, do well or ill, you are always unique. Prince of Caivano, Sarah Temple or, more correctly, Speranza Zuniga, admires you, hopes for your friendship, and, along with your friendship, begs for your pardon of a small and innocent deceit which, after all, was not intended for you."

"Ah! you mean your incognito, Signorina?" replied Don Federigo, making a virtue of necessity like a courtier as he was. "To your eyes people grant anything, and what they don't grant you know how to win. And now allow me to retire. The will is yours, Don Ruggero; take good care of it. One thing only

I ask in exchange—that the change of property may be made by our lawyers, without any publicity, and with a good grace, if not with perfect friendliness. I should greatly like to retain the Castello di Melito, of no great value, estimating it as the smaller portion falling to the second son—a share which I would willingly resign, were it not for the claims of my son, for whom his mother's fortune, though considerable, would scarcely suffice. Farewell then——"

So saying, the prince took leave of his relations and of Signorina Zuniga. But Ruggero stopped him.

"Stop, please," he said; "I have listened with admiration to what you have been saying, but I don't feel as if I could accept your sacrifice in this off-hand way. You must hear me now. We have been poor, and a great deal poorer than you expect to be. We then are familiar with poverty, but not equally familiar with riches. Could we bear the new state of things to which your generosity has so suddenly called us?"

Don Federigo shrugged his shoulders as much as to say—

"My good sir, I can't help that."

"Let us leave that argument alone," continued Don Ruggero, "since you don't feel the force of it. Here is another and perhaps a stronger one. How we come to be in so humble a position, you cannot be ignorant of, certainly. My grandfather's will having disappeared, the two branches of the family divided, or were to divide, the Altavilla property between them in due proportions. But here

political reasons came in, leading to the confiscation of the part that belonged to us. You remember?"

The prince replied merely with a nod of his head to this inquiry, which had awakened in his mind so many sad memories.

"This too," continued the old artist, "was a legacy from my father. In accordance with old-fashioned ideas, our grandfather creates an entail in favour of his eldest son, though he knew that this son had a leaning to the liberal side. In accordance with new-fashioned ideas, the elder son, robbed of an entail with which he would not have known what to do, willingly forfeited also his share of his father's property, and to me he bequeathed nothing except an honourable name, and a self-sacrificing tradition; sacrifices made from patriotism, the most worthy of all motives. Now, do you think, Don Federigo, that I, the heir of Corrado Altavilla and of his liberal ideas, can accept for myself and my children the benefits of a privilege contrary to all natural rights? You will ask me why I went into court then, if such are my views. To secure to my children an honourable name, which was denied them, and to recover the right which I thought belonged to us, *viz.*, a share in the Altavilla inheritance. Against the act of confiscation, there was no appeal; we had no legal right except from the entail, and therefore we appealed to it. Then to-day you come to me and give me back the evidence of my right, which your honesty forbade you to suppress. I thank you, cousin, and I accept it; but not to make any use of it, and to show you that I consider all entails abolished in my case, and in the case of all Italian citizens."

The Prince of Caivano had listened to his Cousin Ruggero—at first with attention mingled with a little shame, latterly with a feeling of amazement which his inborn stateliness only kept from becoming enthusiasm.

"Which of you two is the greatest?" asked Speranza, who had not the same reasons as the Prince of Caivano for keeping silence.

"My Cousin Ruggero, Signorina," said Don Federigo. "For me to discharge an act of duty, it suffices to remember who I am and what name I bear. Ruggero does a great deal more; he surpasses us in generosity and forgets his own reasonable rancour. I accept this second part of his sacrifice; as to the first, I hope he will reconsider it. He hasn't consulted his children," added the prince, seeing Don Ruggero's negative gesture at that moment. "Let him discuss the matter with them, he should not do anything contrary to their interests."

"My father knows us," put in Margherita. "Besides here is Corrado now. He will be able to repeat to you what my father has already said in our name."

Just then another knock was heard at the outer door. Speranza once more acted as porter.

Corrado entered, after receiving from his cousin a brief report of the state of things.

"Signor," he said, "it is for our fathers to command, and what is done by them is right. But if their children also are to give their opinion, I can only say that my Cousin Renato is a capital fellow, and that it remains to me merely to follow his noble example. Let us forget all about this entail, if you please."

"And satisfy two loving hearts," whispered Speranza in the prince's ear, but not too low for Margherita to hear, while her face was overspread with blushes.

"Forget it! That is easily said!" replied the prince, "but there it lies, and I cannot if I would. Nor can I, moreover, profit in any way by such magnanimity," he added, turning to Speranza, "though disguised under the form of an alliance."

"Very well," replied Speranza. "Margherita, a candle."

"What are you going to do?"

"Oh, nothing! Just wait. In a rich person's house there should be a chimney to give suitable dignity to the act. But here, we must be contented with what we have. Thank you, Margherita dear," she continued, breaking off her talk with the prince. "You have guessed what I am thinking of doing?"

"I was just about to do it in accordance with my father's and Corrado's wish.

"Better still! Attention, gentlemen, everybody! The decree of Margherita Altavilla. Having heard the opinion of both father and brother, we decree: That all entails be abolished,and command Speranza Zuniga to execute this present decree."

While she was speaking, the will of Federigo Altavilla, the work of Biagio Turchiarulo, notary, was committed to the flames. The other Federigo stood for some moments motionless, contemplating this work of destruction, while his thoughts ran on the poverty of a house where so great sacrifices could be made.

"Donna Margherita," he then said, approaching her, "I owed you some reparation, and you and yours reply by a deed of unexampled magnanimity. It is you who are princes of Caivano, and I am only your most humble servant."

It was now Margherita's duty to come to the poor prince's relief in his present confusion. Following the secret impulse of her heart, she came timidly towards him and laid her hand on his shoulder, while he threw his arm round her, and gravely kissed her on the forehead.

"How fond my mother will be of you!" he said.

Then, turning to his Cousin Ruggero, he said—

"You will allow my son to come now? He was not to blame, indeed; it was all his father's doing."

"And his father has made all possible amends," remarked Speranza. "But then, after all, are you not all one family? In every heart of iron there is always a heart of gold."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FAREWELL.

HERE, my readers, properly speaking, my story should end, now that we have resolved the difficulty, which so long had been an impediment to the happiness of Renato and Margherita. I know that some tender hearts would enjoy a pathetic scene on the meeting of the two lovers, so long kept asunder. But I am bound to say the meeting of our lovers was outwardly cool and composed, colder than might have been expected after a separation of so many months. You must remember that Donna Margherita was a young lady, and Don Renato a gentleman, both well bred and well-mannered, and that their meeting took place in presence of Don Ruggero, his son Corrado, Don José Moreno, and Speranza Zuniga. Europe and America were looking on, therefore our lovers kept their ecstasies to themselves, and abstained from rushing into each other's arms.

Much prettier and more touching was the scene,

when the old Princess of Caivano and her daughter-in-law mounted the steep ascent of Petraio to congratulate Margherita, and to bring her their wedding presents. This visit Don Ruggero would fain have put off for some days, till the family had moved into a more suitable dwelling and into a more accessible place. But the dear old princess would not hear of such a thing.

"The poor things!" she said. "It is precisely where they have suffered so much from our injustice that we should all go, the whole Caivano family, to entreat the forgiveness of such noble relations."

Here I must confess that the enthusiasm of the old lady, sufficiently justified by the charms of Margherita, was also kindled by the great generosity of Ruggero Altavilla, and by the end of the unlucky will. Vito Schisano's unfortunate daughter was far from confessing so much to herself, but even she had made an effort beyond her strength when she handed over to Renato this evidence of her father's guilt; and the joy of knowing that it had been destroyed made up two-thirds of Donna Anna's genuine satisfaction in her new granddaughter.

Let us end. One morning in February, 1870, many handsome carriages, one after another, might have been seen on their way to the Southern Railway Station. The Via del Molo, ascending from the Largo del Municipio, between Medina and Castel Nuovo, Piliero and Marinella, commanding a view of Vesuvius, and the most beautiful bay in the world, the Porta del Carmine, and the market-place where Massaniello declaimed and Gianni da Procida picked up Conradin's

glove, had seldom seen so many carriages at one time as on this day.

A few others, bound for the same destination, made their way by the Toledo and Via Maddaloni, past the Trinita Maggiore and San Dominico. And in one were seated two young people, a lady and a gentleman, alone, like two birds on a bough, just going to make their nest. And for them, too, a new life was just beginning.

When the carriage reached the Piazzetta del Nilo, both bent to look out of the window. It was involuntary on their parts, and they blushed, but not from any feeling of shame, the motive being the same in both cases.

"There is Donna Romita!" said the gentleman.

The lady seemed touched, cast down her eyes, and held out her hand to her companion, who raised it affectionately to his lips.

"A newly-married pair!" exclaimed a woman, who had caught sight of them as the carriage drove swiftly past. "May the blessing of the Madonna be about them."

At the steps of the railway station a numerous and select party was waiting for them. You know that numerous and select are the two expressions always used of all assemblages however contradictory in terms. Here, in this case, it was correct enough; for the aristocracies of learning, of wealth, and of birth, were largely represented. Among them were the foremost lawyers of the Neapolitan Bar, assembled to do honour to the triumph, by no means legal, but diplomatic, of their fellow lawyer, Garantini. As for

princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses, barons and baronesses, all of the best Swabian, Angevin, Aragonese, and Bourbon families were present; and also all that was distinguished in commerce, science, arts, and administration, fashionable people from Chiaia, and wits from the Café dell' Europa—all Naples, in short, that Naples which fills the boxes and orchestra seats in the Teatro San Carlo, on the first night of a new play, and which, on occasion, can squeeze into the little Teatro dei Fiorentini.

At a short distance from the station, and a little to one side, like conspirators in a melodrama, were two persons of our acquaintance. Like good strategists, they had chosen the ground between a salt and a tobacco shop, and the entrance to a narrow street, and could according to circumstances, stand in one or vanish down the other. From this, you perceive that these two individuals wished to see and not to be seen.

"There they are, all as pleased as they can be!" said one of them, in a tone of deep disgust. "And I couldn't get my revenge."

"You must have patience," said his friend, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Patience, indeed! And you can talk like that. All this comes from listening to your advice."

"And it was good, dear Signor Martino. But you see, how could I tell that this devil of an American would come to spoil everything?"

"Bad luck to her!" exclaimed Signor Martino, in great wrath.

"You must admit," continued his companion, "that

if the American had not appeared on the scene, the two families would never have been reconciled. Neither should I have been hooked, nor would Signor Renato have been able to track the will."

"Certainly. You have done me a good turn, my good Signor Turiello. And, thanks to your weakness, we have both been turned out of Palazzo Caivano."

"Well," replied Signor Turiello, with a look of resignation to the will of heaven, a resignation evident in the first words he had said, "I told you so; you must have patience. As the Tuscans say: 'Bad luck now, better again.' And besides, I have reckoned up, and I don't come out of it so badly as you might suppose. I love the Caivano family, of course; but you see, between one thing and another, I have saved six hundred thousand lire during thirty years' honest service. Then, yesterday evening, Signor Garantini paid me down another fifty thousand, as a reward for my—weakness."

"With the American?"

"Of course; she promised me more if I found the will for her, when, candidly, I thought she wanted it for a different purpose. I didn't succeed; but I put her on the right scent, and the will turned up of itself. For this, and as a consolation, I received the fifty thousand. And you think I have lost everything?"

"You are an accomplished rascal, Signor Turiello."

"Of course, of course; I'm not the dullest man in Naples."

"No, no! With six hundred and fifty thousand lire to dispose of; and you will soon have more, for you are not a man to lay them up in a napkin."

Signor Turiello made a bow, which might mean anything. In the meantime, Signor Palmanova was lost in thought, and his meditations for about ten seconds were concerned with a question which, though seeming rather useless in itself, was merely the prelude to some others of much greater interest.

"Signor Turiello, you have two daughters?"

"Yes, I am happy to say so," replied Schisano, looking him straight in the face. "Why?"

"Because they will be good matches."

"I may say so without pride!"

"And you are thinking already of getting one of them married?"

"Both, by Bacchus! both of them!"

"I see; but I meant—people begin generally with one."

"Of course; let it be one, then. But what do you mean?"

"I mean—to ask you—if you have thought of getting a husband for her."

Signor Turiello gave a knowing wink, to show that he understood; then he replied, quite gravely—

"Signor Palmanova, you know that I have been turned out of the house of my noble relatives for wishing to marry one of my daughters to a duke. That lesson should be enough, you will say."

"Well, I should say so!" remarked Palmanova. "Any man of sense, and a friend of yours, would say the same."

"That's just what I think. I have made up my mind not to pursue any more dukes. My daughters will marry two marquises, or a marquis and a count;

or, if the worst comes to the worst, a count and a baron. Ah, never fear, Signor Palmanova," added his tormentor, redoubling the blow; "I won't let the name of Schisano fall into the mud. You think I am joking? One Schisano is a princess; the others will follow two or three degrees lower in the scale, perhaps, but still noble. We ourselves, you know, can boast of our descent. My grandfather had a genealogical tree. I don't know where it went to; but one thing I know, and will maintain—my daughters shall not fall into the hands of plebeians, nor my money either. They have cost me too much!"

This nipped Signor Martino's wooing in the bud.

"I see," he muttered; "I shall die a bachelor—I mean, fool that I am! a widower."

In the meantime, Signor Turiello, after pressing his companion's hand, left him to hurry down the lane. His lynx eyes had perceived from afar Signor Garantini turning into the station, in company with Antonio Carafa.

But what reason had he to be afraid of Signor Garantini? This: the evening before, when he was giving him the fifty thousand lire, Garantini had promised him a kicking over and above, if he ever came near him again. Garantini was a man of the law, but when he promised a kicking he knew how to apply it, even better perhaps, than he could apply one of the statutes. You can imagine then the haste of our friend Turiello, under such alarming circumstances.

We have, perhaps, spent too much time over these two allies, but it was once for all. And now, if you

have no objection, we will turn back a little, to bid farewell to the young Duchess of Melito. Margherita's appearance in the waiting-room was greeted with a buzz of admiration among the noble company, and the ladies were foremost in admiring her wonderful beauty and the tastefulness of her attire. You know, people are only critical when they are few. Criticism is a cold art, and is nourished by cold; whereas, in a multitude, people's minds are warmed up by proximity, and the spark of enthusiasm flashes forth spontaneously. Besides, beauty is a thing people can deny when they like; but everybody sees it, and feels it; against the testimony of the eyes and heart no sophism can stand. And Margherita, as I have said, was wonderfully lovely. Her bridal dress, her veil, and wreath of orange blossoms, had been exchanged for a dress of a colour between peacock and grey—one of those indescribable colours which have received from Lyons the stamp of fashion, and also one of those uncouth names which every lady picks up at once, but which, in a book, convey no meaning to anybody.

Margherita was smiling pleasantly at all the friendly faces about her; but through her smiles any one could perceive the sadness which every girl must feel at leaving her father's house. Happiness can shed tears, just as there are consolations in our sorrows—the latter sweet, the former bitter, and both the outcome of gentle hearts. In Margherita's eyes, too, shone the bright promises of the future; the future in a new sphere, by the side of the man she loved, who had cost her, and whom she had cost,

so many sorrows. Paris, London, Holland, and Germany were to be visited during the wedding tour. Renato wished to show her all the places he had visited a few months before during his time of woe.

"Margherita," he had said to her, "we have been found wanting in the presence of so many beauties, both of nature and art. I, when exiled from you, visited all those cities of France, England, and Germany, without pleasure, without curiosity; worse still, without in the least doing them justice. We shall visit them together, and it will be the first time for both; but you must remember, that in every one of them your Renato wept for you, and recalled your loveliness with infinite longing."

The young Duke of Melito, more accustomed to flights from the paternal nest, and knowing what a treasure he was carrying off, was rejoicing in his heart like a young Roman gladiator. In the meantime, he was busy greeting the ladies of the party and giving prodigious shakes of the hand to the gentlemen; all, I need hardly say, envying him his wonderful luck. Let us not forget to remark that the ladies did him some little justice also; and while the gentlemen were admiring the bride, they, with more justice and courtesy, were praising both to the skies.

"They will make a sensation in London!" remarked the Duchess of Sarno, a sympathising friend (who had at one time been in London as ambassador's wife) to the Princess Anna.

The gravest face was Ruggero Altavilla's, who was now seeing his daughter depart; and who had before

him the prospect of another and a more trying separation of which Speranza Zuniga could tell something.

Speranza was determined to be the last to say farewell to her friend and cousin, whom she kissed repeatedly at the carriage door.

"*Au revoir*, my dear!" she said. "You must look out for me in London; in about three weeks I shall be there."

"And are you really determined to go back to America?" asked Renato, as he shook hands with her.

"Yes, there is nothing to keep me here; what I came to Naples to do is done——"

"And well done!" exclaimed Renato. "I will never forget, Donna Speranza, what I owe to you."

"Remember me sometimes in your prayers," she said, jocosely.

"And you, Corrado, what are you going to do?" Margherita inquired of her brother, who, with Don José, was standing behind Speranza, waiting for his turn to say good-bye.

"I?" said he, reddening. "I am Don José's secretary. I shall be in London, and, as my father doesn't object, I, too, am going back to America."

Some one now blushed in her turn. It was Speranza Zuniga.

What could Corrado have to do in America, now that he had not to push his fortune there? I cannot say for certain, but what I imagine, you, my readers, can imagine too; for you, too, are probably a little in love with the Queen of Tunguragua.

There were, of course, clouds on the horizon. But

who remembers the clouds when the sun is shining again? Remember Ximenes Gomez, and his grand forgiveness. It is told in the "Romancero," in Speranza Zuniga's language, with sublime simplicity—

> "Where love is found to reign
> Many troubles are forgotten."

THE END.

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